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When Summer Goes

A Novel

BY

MARY F. S. TOY

THE S. S. SCRANTON COMPANY
HARTFORD, CONN.
1925

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by
Mary F. S. Toy

DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF MY DAUGHTER
AND TO THE
HELPFUL PRESENCE OF MY
GRANDDAUGHTER

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CONTENTS

Chapters		*Page*
I.	Maple Tree Farm	9
II.	Ernest Calls on Evelyn Durand	20
III.	Abner Jones	39
IV.	Miss Martha Gale's Home	56
V.	James Sterling	65
VI.	The Lawn Fete	74
VII.	Miss Gale's Visit at the Bank	89
VIII.	Ernest Maysfield Goes to Sefton	97
IX.	The Return from Maple Tree Farm	110
X.	Ernest Makes His Decision	120
XI.	Abe Jones Calls on John Maysfield	129
XII.	The Dance at La Bella Maison	147
XIII.	James Sterling Calls on Mr. Jenkins	160
XIV.	Miss Gale's Return	168
XV.	Dinner at the Road House	177
XVI.	The Next Morning	191
XVII.	Deacon Stebbins Calls on Abner Jones	202
XVIII.	The Proposal	214
XIX.	The Week-end at Uncle John's	229
XX.	James Sterling's Illness	236
XXI.	Mrs. Pipper's Discomfiture	250
XXII.	Abner's Visit to Boston	266
XXIII.	The Dinner Party	281
XXIV.	Wedding Bells	295

WHEN SUMMER GOES

CHAPTER I

IT WAS a hot afternoon the second week in July; not a breath of air stirred. The leaves of a huge maple tree, which stood on the well-kept lawn of an attractive country home were motionless. Beneath its widely extended branches, stretched at full length on the closely cut grass, lay the figure of a young man. His hands, clasped together, formed a support for his head, and with closed eyes his body lay as motionless as the breeze. The stillness was broken only by the stroke of the tall clock in the hall, the sound of which floated out of the open windows. Still, Ernest Maysfield did not move.

Aunt Lydia had just risen from her usual afternoon nap, and while adjusting her toilet, peered through the half-closed shutters of her bedroom window at the prostrate form of her nephew, saying audibly, "I guess Erny is pretty tired with the haying. Poor fellow, he doesn't seem just the same since he came back from the war." Then, turning to her mirror, she carefully scrutinized, for a moment, the glossy black hair lying smoothly each side of the parting. In spite of the fact that it lay very smoothly, she gave it a most vigorous brushing. She must keep up the record, for

Uncle John had often told her as he laid his large brown hand caressingly on her head, "Ma, every hair is always in its place." In fact, the pride of neatness had always been Lydia's besetting sin. As she opened one of the small drawers of the old-fashioned bureau, in the act of selecting a lace collar, her eyes turned once again to the figure under the maple tree. She questioned herself, "I wonder if Evelyn Durand has dropped him?"

Suddenly the honk-honk of an automobile startled her from her reverie, and pausing only to tie the strings of her white muslin apron, she left her bedroom and descended the narrow stairway to the hall below. Proceeding to the kitchen pantry, she took a large bowl and filled it with strawberries from the ice chest and seating herself near the window began removing the hulls from the berries. Aunt Lydia continued her surmising, "I wonder if Erny is asleep or only day dreaming, perhaps of Evelyn Durand! He was fond of her as a small boy and he always liked to talk about her; but some way since he has been here this time he doesn't even mention her name. I tried to lead up to it the other day when he came in from the field, looking warm and tired. I thought it would be a cheerful subject to him, but he cut me short by saying, 'Aunt Leddy, may

I have a piece of that apple pie?' which I had only just taken from the oven. Perhaps, while he was in France she became interested in some one else. If so, I have my opinion of Evelyn Durand. Any way I guess Erny is too good for her. They say that she——.'' At this juncture in Aunt Lydia's ruminations a distressing honk-honk floated in from the hillside. A repetition of the clear certain sound caused the figure under the tree to slowly open his eyes, and simultaneously with the third honk-honk, he rolled over and assuming a half rising posture glanced toward the foot of the hill, where the traveled road ran close to the velvety slope of the Maysfields' lawn.

It was not an unheard of occurrence, in fact it was an almost every-day happening for automobilists to underestimate the steepness of the hill and the cry of distress was sure to bring out Uncle John's Ford, many times to assist a car of more distinguished bearings.

Ernest Maysfield rose reluctantly to his feet, showing outward signs of irritation. He picked up his weather-beaten Panama hat, placing it carelessly on his head, and tying the khaki handkerchief which he used in place of a collar, he strode forth muttering, ''Good heavens! It's worse than the bugle call in camp, but I guess there is no peace for the wicked anyway.''

As he descended the slope, he raised his downcast eyes which had been following the soft flexible grass, and he saw in the distance a shining car, which on closer observation he knew to be a Dodge Roadster. At first he saw no one, but as he drew nearer, he caught a glimpse of a bright plaid skirt and a blue sweater. Evidently a female, he thought. But whether old or young, he could not tell, as she had the hood of her car raised and was bending over. It seemed to him a very long time that she spent peering into the precincts of the engine. At length, to relieve the suspense, he gave a short whistle to signify his approach. As she straightened her figure, and suddenly turning around, he encountered a face of unusual beauty. The rich brown eyes, sparkling beneath dark lashes; the glow of health on cheek and brow was enhanced by soft waving brown hair that glistened in the sunlight with golden flame; a small well-shaped nose, companioned by a rose-bud mouth completed the lovely picture.

Ernest was taken so much by surprise, that he was quite dumb for a moment, but soon recovered his usual easy manner, removing his hat he asked, "Are you in trouble? What can I do for you?"

The girl gave him a glance of evident surprise at his true politeness of manner. "Yes, sir; I

feel very much embarrassed as I am out of gasoline," and biting her lips she continued, "may I speak to the man who lives here? Perhaps he would sell me some gasoline." As there was no answer, she asked, "Is he at home?"

Ernest remained silent, politely staring at his fair interlocutor. "Yes," he said, "I think he can be found somewhere about the place. Perhaps, I could get you some."

"And who are you?" she asked.

"I am only the hired man, in other words a tramp. I work in the summer and turn tramp in the winter."

A shade of disappointment crossed the girl's face as she said, "I would not think you were that kind, but please tell me where I might see the real man of the place. You see I must be going and I need gasoline to climb the steep hill."

She cast a troubled look up the long incline, then asked with still more anxiety, "Do you think I can make it with a gallon of gasoline?"

Ernest now began to show signs of interest and desire to help this attractive young woman. "Excuse me," he said. "I will get you some gasoline," and turning quickly with hurried steps ascended the hill to the garage on the east side of the house. Swinging open the door he filled a gallon measure with gasoline and hurried back.

He poured the contents into the tank of the Dodge car, saying, "I hope you will have no further trouble."

She quickly climbed into the car, then suddenly looking at him she said, "I almost forgot to pay you for the gasoline? How much did you put in?"

"One gallon," replied Ernest, smiling, "But never mind, it is of no account."

She did not hesitate, but taking a small purse from her sweater pocket reached forward and dropped the amount in his hand, quickly followed with another piece of silver which she said was for his trouble. This last remark brought a good natured expression that lightened the face and serious grey eyes of the young man and caused her to give him a kindly smile that showed a set of white teeth. His eyes followed the smile to the perfectly cut chin and white throat.

She started her engine and called back, "Thank you, sir."

Ernest watched her until she reached the summit of the hill and had turned the sharp bend in the road. She was soon out of sight. This particular young man stood for some minutes like one dazed. "Am I awake or dreaming?" he muttered. "But I certainly am a big fool not to have taken the number of her car."

Later, after the cows were milked, he stood in

the kitchen and explained, "By gum, she's a winner."

Aunt Lydia, who was moulding some tea biscuits overheard the remark, and looking kindly at her nephew said, "What did you say about winter, Erny?" No wonder you talk about cooler weather. This day as your uncle says 'has been a scorcher.'" She resumed her preparations for supper, calling out, "I suppose you will join your Uncle John with bread and milk; rest assured that the milk will be cold."

Ernest was drying his hands on the roller towel and he replied, "Thank you, Aunt Leddy, there is nothing I'd like better." Then whistling softly, he passed through the dining room and went out on the porch, settling himself in an easy chair. He sat until the bell rang for supper. We cannot tell whether his thoughts partook of the past with Evelyn Durand as the central figure, or if there was a new vision in which the girl of the afternoon stood foremost.

The Maysfields descended from pure, unadulterated American stock; mostly tillers of the soil, though John's generation had nearly skipped the desire to cultivate the soil. His brother, Amos, studied for the ministry. As soon as he became of age to choose for himself, John, too, in his early manhood, with the restlessness of youth, desired

to try his future at something more lucrative than farming. A great uncle on his mother's side secured a position for him in a large mercantile house in Boston.

Imbued with an economic view of life, he desired, with no insane greed for a large fortune to accumulate, only sufficient of this world's goods, that he might be assured of a competency in old age and also to tide over the intervening years. At thirty his savings, if wisely invested, would increase to a sum which would amply provide for himself and family, which like most sensible men, he desired to possess. The call of the soil came back to him. The blood of several generations of forbears that clung tenaciously to agriculture, just as the Indian after the lapse of years returned to his home in the wilderness.

It did not take John long to resign his present position and secure a large farm. The next step to be taken was the renewing of his friendship with Lydia Sykes, a schoolmate of his boyish days. They had studied together in the small unattractive schoolhouse. He remembered how often Lydia had assisted him with difficult problems. She displayed marked ability in all her studies and usually stood first in her class. Aside from these accomplishments, Lydia was very pleasing to look at; her hair was black and glossy, her

grey eyes soft and alluring, while liveliness of manner, mingled with gentleness, was quite bewitching to the boy who always sought her companionship.

Lydia had been teaching for several years, when John came with the strong determination to ask her to become his wife. He had never cared for the society of girls while in Boston, for carefully laid away in the deep recesses of his heart was the image of Lydia Sykes. He worshipped at her shrine as one altogether lovely and with others there could be no compassion.

Lydia had not seen nor heard from John for many months and her surprise was evident when, returning from school, she met him at the little wicket gate in front of her home. She welcomed him and they were soon talking over the old days, and the past years of separation were soon forgotten in the blissful present. No time was lost for in six months Lydia Sykes was installed wife and mistress of John Maysfield's home.

He was the possessor of a genial spirit and overwhelming optimism, and was absolutely sure that all his earthly treasures were of the finest quality and the very best. His farm, his wife, even his dog, had no peer. Many times as he sat at his table exuberant over the perfectly cooked

food which his wife invariably placed before him, he would launch into some highly colored description of past experiences. He would fairly electrify his listeners, taking them along with him into clouds, of dizzy height.

When a pause occurred, Lydia's voice in a firm subdued tone would say, "Now, John, you know that is not so."

He would stop for a moment and the twinkle in his eyes was delicious. He knew that he was vanquished and would cast an admiring look at his wife.

She would return the look with a smiling rejoinder, "Yes, John, I know. Will you have another cup of tea?"

He well knew that his wife was the safety valve for his pent up enthusiasm. He knew that through her eyes he could sometimes catch a glimpse of life divested of the roseate hue!

No children had blessed their union, but John's brother, Amos, had two, Ernest and Mildred. John often borrowed them, as he called it, each summer. He made tempting inducements for them to visit at Maple Tree Farm, as Uncle John's place was named. When strawberries were ripe the invitation was most urgent. "They are especially luscious this year," wrote Uncle John, "larger than crabapples. Come soon, be-

fore they are gone. They will take the prize anywhere—the finest ever grown." John Maysfield bore a contented mind, rejoicing daily, that the fruit of his labor reached the highest mark. If blighted or an unfavorable season hindered their growth, he passed the superlative adjectives on to another year.

CHAPTER II

ERNEST MAYSFIELD passed his four years at college with honors, and at this time he had serious thoughts of studying for the ministry, but the World War invited him to serve his and other countries. He joined the civil engineers and spent nine months abroad. Ernest, in war or peace, was considered a young man of sterling character. In fact, he was spoken of as worth while.

His mother was supremely lovely in everything that pertains to perfect womanhood; refined, gentle, her whole nature dominated by Christian principles. She passed away, while he was in his first year at college. It colored the joyous tenor of his mind and was responsible largely for the serious view he took of life.

Mary Porter, his mother's sister, took charge of the household and assumed its care and a motherly solicitude for Mildred, who was but fourteen years old. Aunt Polly, as she was called, was a prototype of her sister, although some years older. She had lived alone, and being a frequent visitor at her sister's home, she had kept in close touch with the children and before her sister's death she had won their affections. This was

partly because her manner, which was fashioned after the old school, did not look upon the present generation as too far behind her own. She still believed in gentlemen and ladies, and there was no better example of what a lady should be than herself.

Just a few doors from their home lived a friend and playmate. Their acquaintance and interest in Evelyn Durand began very early in childhood, when dolls and toys were their chief delight. Later, fairy stories, collecting stamps and monograms figured largely in their pastimes.

Evelyn was a sweet child in spite of the influence and teaching of a very silly mother.

Most of the period before she was twelve years old, Ernest held aloof, with something of the scorn exhibited by boys a little older; whether this state of action is caused by conceit or embarrassment, by the usual stripling, must be left to the scientist to decide. At the skating period, Ernest began to take notice and many a fine skate they had together, and came home with rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes. He began to think and his reflection were all the same that Evelyn Durand was a daisy, a mighty pretty girl. She was unlike his sister, even in those days. It was very easy for her to use the slang which prevailed. She was not as conscientious as Mildred and did not hesi-

tate to cheat a little about her sports and pleasures. This, however, did not appear so bad to the young man's mind. It seemed almost smart for he was under the spell of her big blue eyes and rosy cheeks. She would start out to walk with him, when she should have been studying. Somehow it did not appear to him as any wrong; in fact, it pandered to his boyish vanity that she wished to do so. It would have been self-abnegation not to do so.

The years went on and the friendship did not diminish. He invited her to several college festivities and her popularity at these functions added greatly to his pleasure. Then, for two years he did not see her. Her mother decided she must take a year in Paris to study French and Art.

As the war opened Ernest had been the first to enlist and when in Paris, he hoped to see Evelyn before she should return. Their letters were somewhat infrequent; still she held the same place in his heart and he waited patiently to see her again, not for a moment thinking but that it would mean a renewal of their friendship, and he held in his heart a more precious word, "her love."

One Sunday afternoon, soon after his return from France, he went to call on Evelyn, the girl friend of his boyhood days. Her image had al-

ways been installed in his mind, and manlike, he supposed he would still reign in hers. He expected the fire to burn with constant flame, and that, without fanning it. At any rate, he thought the living coals were there and could be rekindled easily.

The home of the Durand's stood at the end of the village street, the latter on either side was shielded by sturdy elm trees. A tall hedge fenced the front lawn from the street and adjacent lot, and at the rear of the house were well-kept gardens and a tennis court.

Ernest turned in at the gateway and followed the walk to the front door. He was conscious that his feet were not keeping time with the rapid beating of his heart. It seemed too good to be true, that he was actually at the doorway and would soon meet the girl he had always admired and to whom he had given his early affections. The well remembered green door with its brass knocker had been reinforced by a substantial screen door, which stood wide open and sounds could easily be heard through the latticed screen.

He ascended the steps of the sheltered portico very quietly. Voices raised to a high key penetrated the stillness of the afternoon. He could not help recognizing the voices as those of Evelyn and her mother.

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Evelyn was saying in an irritable tone, "Oh, hang it! I don't care a continental what dad thinks, I've got to have a new evening gown for the Ball Masque Saturday night. Everything I have is worn threadbare and I think it too mean if I can't have it."

"But, Evelyn, you have been lots of expense this year, and your father may not approve," replied her mother.

"Well, I have my opinion of him. It's a strange, unusual and stingy father who will not give his only daughter decent clothes." At this juncture a book slammed on the floor and other discordant sounds were evident.

Ernest, not wishing to appear a listener to this conversation, rattled the screen door, and coughed slightly in order to doubly announce his presence. He heard quick movements, with some preliminary sounds, as if readjusting their surroundings as well as themselves. Mrs. Durand seemed to have regained her composure sooner than her daughter, as she came to the door. A look of astonishment came into her plump red face, as she unfastened the screen door, extending her hand with the exclamatory greeting, "Why, Ernest Maysfield, where on earth did you spring from? Your father told me that you were not expected for several weeks."

Ernest took Mrs. Durand's proffered hand and entering the room said, "Yes, I was not expected so soon, but I am glad to be back again."

As he finished speaking, Evelyn slowly came forward and looking keenly at him for the space of a minute, gave him her hand and in a loud voice said, "Erny Maysfield, why didn't you telephone that you were coming? Good heavens! you have taken me by surprise."

Ernest was indeed surprised as he looked into the face of his old sweetheart. The vision that he had carried with him for the past four years was that of a bright-eyed young girl; her cheeks a healthful glow and her curly locks confined at the back of her neck by a large ribbon bow. The face before him now was entirely different. The blue eyes looked dull and listless, while the roundness of cheek was broken with lines which caused a peakedness of chin and the small pug nose. The old-time glow of health which shone on brow and cheek was hidden by a plentiful supply of rouge and darkly penciled eyebrows, gave, as it seemed to Ernest, an almost uncanny expression to her countenance. On one cheek stood out a round spot of yellow skin, which the trickster of feminine beauty had failed to cover. The dark hair was short and bobbed. As she vainly tried to assume her old-time manner, she held Ernest's hand, lead-

ing or almost dragging him in her excitement to a seat on a low davenport and noticing a lack of cordiality in his manner she bit her red lips, and said:

"Good Lord, Erny, what is the matter? Have you been sick?"

As he did not answer, she added, "Gosh, how you have changed. I would hardly know you."

But whether in his looks or by his manner, she could not determine, there was the same attractive face of the boy, grown stronger and more marked by the experiences of the man and soldier. The laughing eyes it seemed to her were dull and sad. Poor fellow, he has seen war, no doubt. "I must cheer him up," she thought.

Mrs. Durand evidently had recovered from her surprise at the sudden meeting with Ernest, and following them slowly, she turned to a small smoking stand, took from it a small package of cigarettes and hospitably passed them to him.

He released his hand from Evelyn's and leaning forward said, "No, I thank you, Mrs. Durand, I do not smoke."

She drew the box away with the remark, "How strange it seems to find a soldier that does not smoke."

Evelyn rose hastily to her feet and grasping the cigarettes exclaimed, "Mother, give me one," and

placing it in her mouth she lighted it at the little stand, then taking another from the box, she said, in a triumphant tone of voice, "For the sake of old friendship, Erny, light this by mine. You surely will not refuse such a small favor."

Ernest had risen from his seat and drawing slightly away from the tempter, who stood directly in front of him holding the lighted cigarette between her rosy lips, and entreaty of something more than simple friendship in her large blue eyes. He held his soldier hat firmly between his hands as he said, softly, if not regretfully, "Thank you, Evelyn, I must not."

Evelyn knew Ernest of old, and observed a certain something in his keen grey eyes, something she had often seen when the boys tried to tease her at school, or induce him to join in the things he had a great aversion for.

She dropped the box of cigarettes on the table and taking his hat from him, said, "Let's sit down and talk it over. May I ask what is your reason for denying yourself such pleasure? Has your doctor taken it from you temporarily?" She drew nearer to him, quite sympathetically, as she said, "Have you a weak heart, Erny?"

He was watching her intently, as she puffed the blue clouds of smoke so gracefully about her head, and he was wondering if he was dreaming and

would soon awaken. She did not watch the little circles as they rose and fell about her. He knew that her gaze was fastened on him and that she was waiting for an answer.

Almost reluctantly he began to speak. "No, Evelyn, I am not under orders to refrain from smoking by any physician, but," and he hesitated, "I am under orders from one I love and reverence."

Holding the cigarette between her fingers, the girl at his side looked at him and listened eagerly.

"Yes, Evelyn, from my sainted mother. I promised her that I never would form the habit."

Evelyn looked partially relieved as she said, "Why in the world should she limit your pleasures that way?"

"Because my mother's father was an inveterate smoker and thereby shortened his life. I was her only son and she wanted me to live my justly appointed time. Do you understand?" he said quietly and there was a suggestion of adamant in voice and face.

"Yes, I suppose I do," she replied throwing down her half-finished cigarette. "But, even so, you are strong and in perfect health. Your mother surely would not wish you to forever hold to such a promise. I am sure that she wouldn't. She was not that kind."

Ernest with a half sigh answered, "Just the same I would not feel justified in breaking it."

"Think how much pleasure you lose, for everybody smokes now, and one is quite behind the times not to do so. Mother has taken it up. I don't think father quite approves of it, but, Gee! he can't say anything for he can out-smoke us all and why should men say anything? They have kept us in ignorance of the carefree and social stimulus one gets in smoking. The custom has been so long established in Paris that women smoke everywhere. They are no more a subject of curiosity than a man is. Why should it be any different when you look at it fairly?"

Ernest remained silent, while Evelyn with more excitement continued to remonstrate, "Surely your mother would not care as things are going. You will have to take it up, as all of our set smokes. Pray, what can you be doing meanwhile?"

A gleam of humor twinkled in the eyes of Ernest as he replied, "Sit twirling my thumbs, perhaps."

Something in the unconvinced manner in which he spoke challenged Evelyn to pursue her queries. "Have you any objections? Do you think it wrong for women to smoke?"

"No," he answered quickly, "I do not consider

it a moral question of right or wrong. It is a matter of choice. One must judge for himself. I believe New Englanders are noted for not letting go of old established customs. In the same ratio, we ought to be careful in taking up new ones.''

''But,'' interrupted Evelyn, ''we must progress because my great grandmother made butter and cheese, dipped tallow candles and brought up eight or nine children without commendation, or the ballot. Why should I?'' she breathlessly continued, ''follow her tame, inglorious example? It would be assinine to do so.''

Ernest, ignoring the question, implied in her last remark, said, ''Custom has always governed both prince and pauper. Public opinion is all powerful. New customs prevail, that at first shock the general public, but by constant familiarity overcomes repugnance and dislike. The habit is adopted; custom sanctions it; and if the habit proves an injurious one, it will take all the longer to eradicate it. Perhaps, several generations to only partially subdue it.'' He paused, and looking earnestly at Evelyn asked, ''Who started cigarette smoking for women?''

Evelyn who was evidently weary of this kind of conversation, replied with indifference, ''I don't know and I don't care.'' Then, contrariwise added, ''Who did?''

"Well," answered Ernest, "loath as I am to admit it, the women and girls of the—I mean those that have been deprived through adverse circumstances from studying the higher ideals that help us to reach the greater happiness. Then, some of the so-called upper class took it up knowing they would have an abundance of followers. If Mrs. Gaston who lives on the beautiful, spacious estate of Sunny Place on Luxury Hill, adopted any new custom, it would not be questioned; only perhaps by a few fanatics. Women certainly ought to be permitted to enjoy every privilege that their fathers and brothers have, but a man after a long business day has few resources for relaxation compared to women. They either sew or take up their various kinds of knitting, while the man unless he can smoke his pipe in peace has little to do and this state of idleness may end in a scrap with his wife or children."

Evelyn crossed one knee over the other showing a perfectly moulded leg and dainty slipper. She, laughingly, responded to this last suggestion, "I see, Erny, you will only champion your own sex, but please let us drop this subject, for too much of a good thing becomes a bore. You were cut out for a preacher, but pray, do not practice on me."

Mrs. Durand had left the room as was her custom when an available young man was present. She many times recalled a distinctive period in her youth, when her chances for matrimony had been materially jeopardized, by some member of the family remaining in the room, whenever a young man called. Notwithstanding this chastening experience, with the fact that she had been defrauded of her natural rights, a desire was always uppermost in her mind to mingle, laugh and jest the young people with her daughter's friends. If a momentary hesitation crept over her as to the advisability of being present she would salve over her conscience with her ready-made and inexhaustible supply of persuasive argument. The directions for application read in this wise. Evelyn is not fully grown as yet and my larger experience and quickness of perception will materialize or bring about that sense of ease and perfectly at home feeling that will induce a man to come again. To be sure, Evelyn did not see any benefit to her in this process of reasoning and when interrupted by her mother coming into the room to look for a book or some like trivial excuse, she invariably expressed signs, such as frowning and a restlessness of manner, which her mother purposely did not see.

The appearance of Ernest was so unexpected

and at a time when she and her daughter were having an unusual difference of opinion over clothes and fearing she had shown some annoyance and a lack of warmth in her greeting, she decided to return to the living room in search of the *Christian Herald,* a most worthy paper, which they yearly subscribed for, but rarely had the time to read.

Ernest rose to his feet as Mrs. Durand hurriedly explained, "Don't stand, Ernest. I am only looking for the Sunday paper."

Evelyn looked annoyed as she exclaimed, "The Sunday paper, mother. You had it in your room and were reading it all morning."

It was her mother's turn to look annoyed, but wisely avoiding a hasty reply, she spoke calmly, "I meant that I was looking for the *Christian Herald.* I have a little time to spare and I thought that I would use it by glancing over it."

She drew a chair to the side of Ernest and patting him on the sleeve said, "Sit down, Ernest, I can't stop but a minute. I want to ask for your father and sister."

Ernest remained standing and reaching for his hat said, "Thank you, Mrs. Durand, my father and sister are very well, but I really must be going."

Mrs. Durand advancing nearer said, "Why

hurry, Erny? You haven't told us anything about yourself during those awful months."

"I really must go," replied Ernest, "My father is to preach at South Glenford Chapel this evening and I promised to drive him over."

Mrs. Durand continued her ovation, "We are so glad to see you and have you home again. You must be very neighborly as Evelyn is lonely. Parkington is pretty tame after two years in Paris. I expect you notice her Parisian ways; quite different from the old times."

As Ernest did not reply, she continued, "I hope you will assure your dear father that I am extremely sorry that I cannot attend his church more frequently, but Mr. Durand needs to get out of doors on Sunday, and we usually motor some distance. Life is so different and strenuous, men need change and diversion." She paused for a moment, and dropping her eyes to the gaily colored rug, with a half sigh and affected voice, "Old-fashioned notions are passing away. People do not go to church any more. They play golf instead; at least the up-to-date ones do. My husband says, 'he really must read the Sunday paper in order to keep up with things,' and after he has finished Evelyn and I always have a race to read the social items. You know it is very awkward, if you are at the Club Sunday afternoon, to be

ignorant of what our really best people are doing. To be sure, I do not see how the churches will be kept open on Sunday. They may use them during the week for suppers or lectures.''

Or, interrupted Ernest, ''On Sunday for moving pictures.'' There was a tinge of humorous irony in his voice which he tried to conceal by saying, ''I suppose if this new order of things prevails, there will be much to rearrange in the future. Good afternoon, Mrs. Durand. Goodbye Evelyn,'' and casting a swift glance at her he walked away.

Mrs. Durand followed Ernest to the door, but Evelyn irritated by her mother's presence and monopoly of the conversation during these last few minutes stood somewhat back rather sulkily by the table.

Mrs. Durand with her eyes on the paper, and the preoccupied air of one who is reading said slowly, ''Ernest Maysfield is a very handsome fellow.''

''I'm glad you think so,'' parried Evelyn, as she took a book from the table, kicked the mahogany footstool aside, lit a cigarette and seated herself in an easy chair with an indifferent air and began to read.

Mrs. Durand ascended the stairs with a somewhat annoying conviction of guilt that she had

spoiled what might have been a very happy interview between her daughter and Ernest.

Evelyn shortly dropped the novel she was reading and dreamily began a comprehensive review of her first meeting with Ernest since his return. She was much impressed by the change in his looks and manner. During these years of separation, she had rarely thought of him, unless reminded by meeting his father or sister. Unlike his loyalty to her, she had not cherished the memory of her boy follower. Evelyn's nature was variable, and she worshipped at many shrines.

When Ernest was in college, she was studying art in Paris and when she returned to her home, just before the war broke out, she was visiting friends in California, at which time Ernest was training for service.

"Yes," she thought, "Ernest has changed in many ways. I admire his looks but I don't care for his fogy notions. No one could call him a sissy, he is too strong and courageous for that. Her vanity was somewhat piqued, as he did not rush to do her bidding, or fall in with her new ideas. How dull it would be to listen to that kind of talk day after day. I shall do my best to make him over. I will do my darndest," she confidently asserted, and then in a moment almost flinched in this resolution as she caught a vision of his

clear, searching grey eyes but "pshaw" she muttered and lighting another cigarette returned to her novel.

As Ernest Maysfield turned his face homeward new emotions were struggling for existence. The pictures his imagination had painted were rudely shattered by the easy platitudes of modern progress. He was not a weak man. The struggles which his ancestors had so uncomplainingly borne had imparted to his generation a strength and courage in their convictions. He was not ignorant of the ways and customs of the world about him. Aside from the physical and mental strength due to heredity the twigs of his mind had early been bent. They inclined in a certain direction so his inclination was ever to follow in the well beaten paths that his ancestral saints had walked. He also knew that this attitude of mind was treated lightly and often times scornfully.

He had faith that his loved ones as well as himself would in some way be tranquilly lifted above the feverish restlessness, that follows this new birth of diverse creeds and doctrines.

The interview with his old time supposedly friends had bewildered him if not shocked him. "If our old structures are tumbling, upon what foundation shall we build the new." Some way he did not feel quite sure of his standing until he

entered the house and stood in the calm, forceful presence of his father and looked into the kind peaceful face of his Aunt Polly.

Mildred was playing the piano and he joined her in singing, "My Faith Looks Up To Thee."

CHAPTER III

"GOOD MORNING, Uncle John, how's the weather?"

John Maysfield stood on the small well-kept porch, facing east; his right hand shading his eyes as he surveyed the horizon. "Well, Erny, bad day for haying. Guess we'll have to get the bays shod while Henry and Job tackle the wood pile."

Dropping his right arm and placing both hands in his wide pockets of his blue overalls, cut in the old time fashion, he faced his nephew asking, "Sleep well, Erny. Get too tired with mowing the hay yesterday?"

"No, uncle, not a bit," replied Ernest. "It's too bad we can't go on with it to-day."

"Yes, but pr'aps it's just as well to take a holiday," then dropping his eyes to the ground, he added, "How would you like to take the team over and get the old Dick and Tom shod at Abner Jones' on the corner, or pr'aps you would prefer to take the day in town; go to the movies or call on some girl, Eh, Erny?"

"No, uncle, I should enjoy above all things to take the horses over and have a visit with Abe. He's a corker you know," said Ernest.

"Yes, you are right. He's a bully good fellow to chin with, but let's sit down until Leddy calls us to breakfast," returned Uncle John.

A small side bench and several old-fashioned black wooden chairs provided seats. After comfortably seating himself in the wide arm chair, Uncle John stroked his beard and pushing back the hair from his forehead, remarked, in a careless manner, "You don't seem to care much about the girls. Has any one disappointed you, so you don't care to take notice any more?" Uncle John gave a slight cough.

His nephew moved uneasily and dropping his right leg and crossing it with his left replied, "Oh no! Uncle John, it's all right, clear sailing for me. I'm not sufficiently interested in any one as yet for I think good sense demands me to wait until I can get established in some kind of business."

Uncle John leaned forward and gesticulating diagonally with both plump hands continued spiritedly, "There's were you are right my son." He frequently addressed his nephew in this endearing way as, having no son, he evidently liked to speak the word himself.

"It is better to wait and not be in too much of a hurry. Now your Aunt Leddy and I waited. We sometimes think almost too long, but I am inclined

to think that is the secret of our getting on so well. You know wild colts never pull together. To be sure your aunt and I haven't always seen eye to eye. Women get sot on some subjects; then I suppose like all of their sex they like to take the bit in their own mouth sometimes, then I try to cool down a bit. Well, if they can only get in the last word they think—" here Uncle John winked his right eye—"they are sure they have gained the victory. You may feel a little sheepish, but begin to whistle and start about your work and think occasionally of the mighty good pie you'll get for dinner. The saying is that the sun shines brightest after a squall."

Just then a clear sweet voice issued through the open door. "Breakfast is on the table, John. The pancakes are never good unless eaten hot."

"All right, Leddy, we'll be there as quickly as a cat can wink her eye," and he finished by whistling, Nellie Bly.

This was the day following the casual meeting of Ernest and the young lady when her car lacked gasoline. He slept very little that night. His mind reacted between Evelyn Durand, the girl of his youthful dream and the new vision of loveliness that had appeared so unceremoniously to him the day before. From his last unsatisfactory meeting with Evelyn, he felt that only the dredges re-

mained in his cup for happiness. He was sure that the main spring that ran his former time was broken, and never could be changed.

Ernest's nature was not changeable in the common application of the word, but his promptings from youth were strong toward the sentiments of love and protection. His mind was in a receptive mood and he was resolved to trace this young girl. Perhaps, she stopped at Abe Jones' stand for more gasoline, if so, Abe would have noticed the make of her car and very likely would remember the number.

The boundaries of Abe's life were so narrow that each event was written in his mind. That surely was the first place to make inquiries.

After breakfast was finished, and, before leaving the table, a chapter from the Bible was read. This had been for years the usual time for worship in Uncle John's househld and which Aunt Leddy insisted upon continuing.

Soon after Ernest perched on the high seat of a farm wagon driving a pair of well-cared for horses started for Mr. Abner Jones'. Abner was familiarly known in the neighborhood as "Abe."

His place of business was about two miles from the Maysfield's farm and was originally used only for shoeing horses and cattle, which was his

father's trade until he passed away; then his son carried it on as a matter of choice.

The building was of stone, solidly built, with only one story; the blacksmith shop. Abe had had added another story made of wood and when asked why he did so was wont to say, "The Good Book recommends a house built upon a rock, and it will always stand. A solid foundation seems good to me." He had added to his business a plentiful supply of gasoline and all the accessories to assist the passing automobilist. The place standing on a four-corners was admirably adapted to this new branch of business.

Abe was a garrulous fellow; some called him lazy. He devoted himself only to these two branches of business. The remainder of his time was unoccupied with anything useful. His garden was the laughing stock of his neighbors.

This morning he was reading an old newspaper when Ernest Maysfield appeared on the distant brow of the hill. Abe dropped his paper and regarded his wife who was trying to light a fire with green wood. He observed that she was in no agreeable mood, then he arose saying, "By George if it ain't that young Maysfield feller coming over the hill. I bet ten to one he's headed straight here."

His wife, who was pounding energetically a

much too long stick of wood with the stove handle, in her efforts to get it in its proper place snapped back, "Well, I'm glad Abe Jones, if you've got to drop that horrid newspaper and stir yourself. I've worked with green wood for twenty years and it would serve you right if you had to go without your dinner and supper too."

"But Maria Jane, my mother used to say that we had to be in the fiery furnace for discipline's sake else we would get too selfish you know."

The lids slid vigorously over the front of the stove, while Maria Jane straightened her slender figure and pointing the thin stove handle in a threatening manner, almost screamed, "I should think your mother must have had a hot time, 'a fiery furnace as she called it', in bringing you up; such a shiftless, lazy, good for nothing fellow. She deserved it too. I wish—I hope she isn't in one now."

"Why Maria Jane, however could you speak so badly of my sainted mother, who never said a bad word and who made such excellent nut cakes. By George, they were great!"

Abe hastened to descend the stairs leading to the shop. He felt his last words had added more fuel to the flames and a distant smash of tinware followed by a shrill exclamation caused him to whistle loudly so that the approaching young

man should not hear anything of this scene of domestic infelicity.

"Good morning, Mr. Maysfield," and Abe waved his hand graciously toward the young man.

"What can I do for you to-day?"

Ernest sliding from the seat of the wagon began to unbuckle the reins saying, "Will you be so kind as to shoe Dick and Tom? It's a bad day for haying and we thought it would be a good time to do this."

"You are right, Sir. I'm glad you came early as others may be of the same mind. You can only make hay while the sun shines," with this remark Mr. Jones proceeded to light his furnace fire and curiously enough found plenty of dry material to do so.

"If the thought of Maria Jane and her trials flashed into his mind, he soon smothered it in his robe of cheerfulness. Abe liked company and no visitor ever wearied him or stayed too long.

Ernest led in one horse and stood watching with keen interest each move of the smithy. "By the way, Mr. Jones, how do you like taking care of automobiles? Is it irksome and not as pleasant as shoeing?" inquired the young man.

"O well," drawled Abe, "I'm gettin' used to it. At first, it did not come natural, I would run to the forge instead of the tank, but you know," he added,

changing his quid of tobacco into the other cheek, "it's all gettin' used to a thing. When I got married at first, it took me a long time to git used to a woman's ways. You see I had a splendid mother. She was very particular in bringing me up, never to use any bad words. Why, 'Gosh Darn,' she said, 'was on the border land of swearing and Damn was the pass word to perdition.' To speak much above a whisper on Sundays was to her way of thinking sacrilegious. So you see, Mr. Maysfield, I had a wonderful bringing up, but then, I got married. Maria Jane was good and pretty in her way, but it seems they never make wives, like our mothers. Why, when I tell Maria Jane how saintly my mother was, and about her never using no bad words, it seems to excite her to the extent of using some awful strong ones, quite beyond the borderland and when I speak of mother's cooking—you see Maria Jane worked in a milliner's shop and knew next to nothing about cooking. Well, if I just allude in an off-hand way to mother's mince pies that would melt in your mouth, she always cut them in quarters, Maria Jane uses ripping language and don't calm down for twenty-four hours. You're not married Mr. Maysfield, but when you are you will know all about this difference in the temperament between wives and mothers."

By this time, the furnace was ready for action

and Ernest repressed a smile as the blacksmith finished his discourse on the philosophy of different natures. He was eager to begin his questions that were torturing his breast and to do so before the pounding on the anvil would begin.

"O! Mr. Jones, did a young pretty girl stop here for gasoline yesterday afternoon? We gave her a little at my uncle's home, but it could not have helped for any distance."

Ernest stepped back and patted Dick on the head in his efforts to appear indifferent to Abe's reply.

Mr. Jones was in the act of raising his sledge hammer on the red hot iron he had placed with big tongs on the anvil. Abe was desirous at all times to give any required information.

"Well, let me see, you say it was in the afternoon. It seems to me, let me think." Ernest found himself holding his breath. Abe stood motionless in deep thought.

"Yes, sir, I did see a young girl driving a bran new looking car. She wore no hat and her hair was light colored."

"Yes, that surely is the one. Did she stop and did you notice the number of her car?" eagerly inquired the young man.

The blacksmith shook his head and resumed his pounding. Ernest showed signs of disappoint-

ment and his heart sank lower and lower to the tune of the anvil.

Suddenly Abe stopped his work, scratched his head with the unoccupied hand, saying, "By George, I seem to remember those numbers. You see I wasn't busy and stood out of doors on the northwest side of the shop watching a cock fight between Deacon Stebbins' Plymouth Rock and our Bantam. It didn't seem possible that our little fellow could ever stand his ground, but I'll be durned, if he didn't and won the fight, too. I was mighty glad it turned out as it did, because that deacon is sort of high and mighty, and all the folks are pretty down and out in his eyes, unless they, or their fathers held some office in his church." Abe paused for breath, and was about to resume fastening the shoe, when his eyes rested upon Ernest.

It occurred to him that he had not answered the young man's question. "You were asking me about the number of the Dodge car. Oh, the reason I noticed it was the number itself. When she slowed up her car right in front of the shop as though she expected to stop, just then a ray of sunshine shot right across the marker, and I was struck with the fact that there were three fives and a one. It was 1555."

"But then what state?" interrupted Ernest.

"It was Massachusetts, I recall that clearly," replied Abe.

"Perfect," thought Ernest, "if she is in the good old commonwealth I'll find her yet."

Here Abe suggested that Ernest try some apples from his golden sweet tree in the near-by field, adjoining the shop. He gladly assented for he felt the object of his call was over, and he wished to be by himself and think out some definite plan of action.

Upon reaching home that evening, he found a letter from his old friend, Evelyn Durand. For a minute as he looked at the familiar handwriting his heart gave a bound and momentarily he forgot the girl of his quest.

Evelyn had been for so many years the supreme object of his thoughts that it was not as easy as he had supposed to dispel them at once. The old thrill came as he slowly broke the seal and began to read the familiar words.

My dear old friend Erny:

Why is it that you have not been to see me but once since your return? What have I done to deserve such coldness? You did not appear like your old self the other night. Have I changed to such an extent that you do not care for me any longer? Perhaps the next time we meet we will

stand on the old footing ground. I certainly hope so.

Until then, I remain,

Faithfully yours,

EVELYN DURAND.

After reading this letter so like her old self, Ernest felt like narrowing the gulf which he had so scornedly placed between himself and Evelyn. The girl he had so recently filled his mind with was now replaced by the old time Evelyn; the girl who looked sweetly into his face and laughed merely at his boyish jokes when carrying her books to school or her skates to the pond after school hours. It could not be. It was only a horrid nightmare. He would go and see her the first opportunity, so past memories would blot out new desire.

"This new girl can be nothing to me. I do not know even her name," and so with the quickness of youth, he decided not to bury the past.

He must have been hasty in his judgment of the change he discovered in his old sweetheart. Was he so fickle that he could cast over old friends so calmly? He reproached himself, reading the letter over several times, looking earnestly at her photograph and even placing it under his pillow upon retiring.

That evening Ernest was conscious of weariness of mind as well as body. After supper it was his custom to join his uncle and aunt on the broad piazza that faced the west. The sun had faded and they enjoyed a quiet twilight talk, which Uncle John named it. Each sat in their respective chairs while their nephew preferred the wide railing.

To-night Ernest found it difficult to respond to his uncle's ready remarks and the polite questioning of his aunt's as to the events of the day. Even the effort to listen attentively was overcome by his desire to be alone and wrestle with his discordant thoughts.

"Are you tired?" asked Aunt Leddy, in her smooth plaintive voice. "They must not work you too hard, Erny."

"That's true," said Uncle John as he leaned forward unfastening the soft collar of his shirt, the act reminding one of a bird ruffling his feathers.

"Erny's muscles are soft now, but after he has pitched a few more loads of hay they will be hard as iron."

This tender solicitude was so unfair, so contrary to the true cause of his reticent mood that Ernest Maysfield could not accept it, and sliding off the high railing said, "I will confess to feel-

ing stupid and tired, so I had better follow the example of the other haymakers in this countryside and turn in at once."

Then bidding them "good-night" he entered the open doorway, but paused at the foot of the near-by stairway to call back, "Call me early, please, so that I may help with the milking."

"Surely," responded Uncle John from the depths of the morris chair. Then he added, "Milking exercises the muscles of the hand besides being a mighty good appetizer for an early breakfast."

Ernest stood for a time at his window, his gaze fixed on an apple tree covered with a mantle of pink and white blossoms.

"How wonderful are Thy works, O Lord! Our feeble minds cannot comprehend Thy majesty and wisdom." Thoughts that uplift held his mind for several moments.

Then, as the sunlight flashes over clouded spaces, and goes as quickly as it came, Ernest turned from the window. The brightness and beauty fled, and the thoughts that had tortured him took their places again in his mind.

He went to a small steamer trunk and took a photograph from the pocket in the lid. It was the picture of Evelyn Durand, his sweetheart. He had carried it during his war service in

France; had called it his mascot. He looked long and earnestly at it and upon retiring placed it under his pillow. For a time he strove restlessly with the complex situation, and not until the shadows deepened and his perceptions dimmed as to the present, the hour when things that are real and things that seem, blend in the fantasy of strife.

Soon nature offered sweet restoratives, precious sleep. A deep calm, a seductive calm bridged the torrent of emotion that overflows the troubled spirit; like the orchestral strains of music that preludes the singer's voice, his mother stood befor him. She seemed to be walking beneath the apple blossoms and garden of bright flowers. She smiled so sweetly, and beckoning to him, she took his arm and they walked among the different flowers. She halted before a bed of brilliant zinnias and said:

"Beware of these; they only attract the eye by their brilliancy of color, but there is no sweetness or fragrance."

Again she stopped before a huge bed of poppies. "These, too, have no fragrance, no sweetness and they have hindered and dwarfed many lives by their insidious attractions. Do not love the poppy."

Then, suddenly leading him to a bed of roses

of many colors, she earnestly pressed his arm, saying, "Such as these have beauty and fragrance in their wake. They minister to the joyous and the sorrowing. Take notice of the rose, my son."

Then, passing on, she pointed to many lovely flowers, lured on by their fragrance. Standing before a beautiful lily, she turned to him, saying, "This flower denotes purity mingled with fragrance. It speaks not only of the deeper things of life, but points to the divine. Draw nearer, my son, and look into the heart of the lily, and looking he saw and saw her clearly, light brown eyes, full of earnestness, a halo of golden brown hair and on the green leaf was written in letters of gold 1555.

He reached out to pluck the lily, but, in doing so, it vanished and a tall brilliant zinnia stood in place of it.

It seemed to speak and say, "I am one that attracts and distracts. I live on the surface and am not lasting as all vain things. I live for pleasure and for to-day—come to my party says the spider to the fly."

He turned to look for his mother, but she, too, had vanished. The dream was so realistic that he suddenly awakened, and rubbing his eyes, rose from his bed and looked out of the window ex-

pecting to see something, but he saw only the apple tree in the orchard clad in rich blossoms. It returned its gaze, but only the stillness of the night reflected the present with its disturbing realities. Ernest returned to his bed, but first removed Evelyn's photograph from beneath his pillow.

Meantime, in a distant town, Elizabeth Harding was dreaming of a soldierly lad, who helped her climb a very steep mountain, and rescued her from danger, while Evelyn Durand at "La Belle Maison" was telling her dance partner of a soldier friend whom she hoped to make over into a man of the world. He had always been led around by apron strings and was becoming very sissified.

"Believe me, Ernest Maysfield must wake up for he has the making of a man. If he will break away from old fogy notions and the traditions of a minister father. The next dance we have, you will see Erny with me," and she gazed sweetly into the face of her companion.

"Oh yes," he observed, "trying to make me jealous. You don't do it old girl. Come let's sit out this next dance with a cigarette."

CHAPTER IV

ON the east side of the hill overlooking the main street of the village, stood a fine old-fashioned house occupied by Miss Martha Gale.

In the same house had lived, toiled and died, two previous generations. Martha's grandfather had built the house so substantially that her father, and also herself had made but few improvements or alterations. An occasional coat of white paint with yellow trimmings had answered to the call of many winters and changeless summers. A perfectly kept driveway dividing a long stretch of lawn, led to the three stone steps of a wide circular piazza, which was supported by six huge white pillars, seeming to guard the heavy oaken doorway. The door itself with its shining brass knocker was the embodiment of durability and ancient workmanship. Each side of the door were two windows reaching to the floor. The hangings, as visible from the outside, were of white lace and green rep. The latter was tied back and looped with heavy green cord. There was no walk to the house, which was explained rather tartly by one of her neighbors, that Miss Martha expected only people of quality to call

and arrive with coach and footman. The few privileged pedestrians that sought the door pressed their feet on a red gravelled driveway. A few of the bolder sort tried the green grass, explaining that it was just to avoid the dust.

This particular afternoon early in July, Martha was sitting on a small side veranda hedged in by a rather high pillared railing. This spot which in winter was enclosed for flowers and creeping vines was used in summer as a quiet out-of-doors resting place. Facing south and west the southern exposure was separated by the large vegetable garden and a terraced slope bordered with boxwood. The west side enclosed the flower garden and quite in the rear stood a roomy barn, which had been remodeled for automobiles in one part and the other was used for a stable for old Dobbin.

Miss Martha was not old fashioned in all things, yet she clung tenaciously to old traditions and mostly met innovations as unwelcomed intrusion. She was tall and slender with a still youthful figure and to-day wore a gown of soft gray and white striped muslin. The white collar encircled a well preserved throat. Her iron gray hair lay smoothly over a rather high forehead. Two little curls were confined with tortoise shell combs back of each ear, while the rest of her hair lay smooth and unruffled. The eyes were pale blue with dark

lashes, a straight well proportioned nose, her thin lips covered an even set of well preserved teeth and the chin was somewhat square, indicating strength of character.

It was after five o'clock. The sun was playing hide and seek between the forest of trees that bordered the farm on the west. Miss Martha laid down the book she had been reading in her lap and idly turned the leaves with her slender white fingers. Then she took up her knitting, but every now and then turned her head toward the driveway as if listening for someone. Shortly, a colored maid entered from the opened door and curtsying inquired if she should bring in the tea and if Miss Betty had not come.

Miss Martha reprovingly raised her eyes toward the spot where the girl stood, saying, "Esmerelda, Miss Elizabeth has not come. You need not serve the tea at present."

The girl clutching her white apron on each side gave another rather hurried curtsy and after two or three slow precise steps darted through the dining room into the back hall and kitchen.

Mr. Jenkins, the elderly factotum of the premises stood in the doorway holding in one hand a faded straw hat, while the other held a red bandana, which he brandished over a perspiring brow. This feature elongated by a perfectly bald

head was outlined by a scanty fringe of hair that partially shaded a seamed and furrowed neck.

Esmerelda or Elda as she was called by her nearer friends and comrades burst into a rollicking laugh; her black eyes twinkling with fun, and spying Mr. Jenkins she restrained her merriment long enough to say, "Mister Jenkins, I neber can larn to say Miss Lisbeths and I know Missus Martha don't like me to say Miss Betty."

Mr. Jenkins turned slowly and with an air of momentary disgust he said, "Don't be a fool, Elda, there ain't nothing to laugh about. Miss Martha knows what's right and you best do it."

"But—"

"There's no buts about it," interrupted Mr. Jenkins as he pulled his aged hat well down on the back of his head. Then slowly drawing it to the front, he turned his head slightly and faced Esmerelda as she broke into a second spasm of laughter. Then with an air of disgust, he crossed the well-worn threshold and his rheumatic feet descended the stone steps that led to the garden.

Esmerelda followed him with her eyes, muttering, "Old Sart Rustus is cross to-day. P'raps its too hot for him. He best go South and get custom to hot wedder. I reckon down there de butter on his br'd would melt and run clean down his chin most ebery day."

During the little shifting scene in the kitchen, Miss Martha rocked restlessly to and fro. She was now reading a few paragraphs from "Galusha the Magnificent," and then knitted a few rows on a bright sweater she was making for her niece, Miss Elizabeth Harding. Occasionally she consulted her wrist watch, and after a while went in to see if the ancestral clock which always ran true to the standard time was correct with her watch. Returning to the porch she did not resume her chair but paced back and forth for several minutes.

"What is keeping Elizabeth," she said half aloud, "I fear her automobile is out of order. I almost regret that I was induced to get it. A horse is a vain thing for safety but a machine sometimes is impossible. It has seemly two natures, 'to go or not to go.' There is nothing between. I hope she has not ventured too far or lost her way. She is not unlike most young women of the present day; an all-together too self-confident and presuming. I wish I had gone with her."

With this last utterance, she sighed deeply, and picking up a large palm leaf fan wielded it vigorously as if to allay her nervousness. To add to her worried state of mind, she discovered a dark cloud partially obscuring the sun and with an ominous gesture over-shadowing the lawn. Her

distress increased when a low muttering of thunder was heard. Stepping to the end of the porch she saw Jenkins ambling towards the stable. She called to him loudly to come and he hastened to obey. With hat in hand he inclined his head which served for an obeisance to his lady's command.

Miss Martha's composure and dignity of demeanor inspired her domestics with a respectful attitude toward her.

"Are we to have a thunder storm, Jenkins?" she inquired anxiously.

He slowly raised his eyes from the few weeds that were trespassing on the gravel walk, and undisturbedly replied, "It may be and it may not be," then turning to study the atmospheric signs, he said, "I think, Miss Martha, we shan't get much of a shower here, the wind is in the wrong direction."

While Miss Martha was strong in all respects this was the one in which she showed weakness; the dread of thunder storms. Jenkins knew this and tried to prevaricate even in the face of a storm to deny its existence.

Miss Martha's brow released as she remarked, "I am so glad Jenkins you think the storm will pass for Miss Elizabeth is out in her car. It is late. Do you think anything could have happened?

"Nothing more serious than a flat tire, which is easily corrected," answered Jenkins. "She will probably come soon."

He hardly finished speaking when the car turned up the driveway and the sprightly figure of a young girl alighted at the garage.

"She is here; just came," and quickening his pace as he saw the black cloud that was very near he went to assist the girl.

Miss Martha's face beamed with gratitude as her niece came up the path to the house.

She exclaimed, "Aunty dear, I hope you did not worry. Nothing much happened. I did get on a wrong road which hindered some. I faced a steep hill without much gasoline, but fortunately a true knight was sleeping under a wonderful maple tree. I was the good fairy to awaken him and he sold me some gasoline. I think I could have made it without his help, but I couldn't resist the opportunity to awaken a sleeper like that. He was a handsome fellow with the truest eyes and frankest manner, Aunty! He was even in working clothes, but I really think he was a gentleman."

Her niece pausing for breath, Miss Martha spoke, "You think, my dear, you were the fairy that awakened him. Very likely he was inwardly provoked to be disturbed on such a warm day."

"O, but aunty, he didn't show it at all; quite the opposite," eagerly replied Elizabeth.

"Yes, I know, my dear, but you cannot judge by a momentary or casual glance at the exterior of a youth what his real thought and character is. Caution is the word, my dear. Knights have been relegated to the past. Men," she continued, "are now divided into two classes. Men buried in business and men buried in sports. The handsome knights who rode prancing steeds and sang ditties under their ladies' windows are all gone. They live only in imagination; the heroes of song and verse."

"But aunty, how about the boys that went to war to save the world? Aren't they knights, too? Noble heroes who will live forever in prose or poetry. The old fashioned knight borrowed much of his beauty and supposed bravery from his armor and noble steed. I believe my knight, who lay sleeping under the maple tree is a truer knight than those of old. His armor was the dress of the hay field, but with those eyes, aunty, I believe he could have sung a love song that would have rivalled Romeo's. I think—."

At this juncture, Miss Martha showed signs of a gentle impatience and interrupted her niece, "Come, my dear, supper is long waiting, and Esmerelda is quite impatient."

When they entered the dining room, Esmerelda was closing the windows in furtherance of safety during the coming storm. The room was close and stuffy and as Jenkins' predictions seemed about to be fulfilled, the clouds had passed, leaving only a slight sprinkle. The light of the lovely sunset was returning to precede the soft glow of a fading twilight. They sat at their evening meal, but Miss Martha did not encourage her niece in any more rhapsodies over the delights of the present day. No. Miss Martha resolved to accompany her niece on the next automobile ride.

CHAPTER V

JAMES STERLING was a man of the business world but not entirely devoted to his large financial work. He was not a society man, but he keenly enjoyed sports chiefly for the benefits derived from physical exercise. He combined the qualities that make our best and most enterprising men.

He was born of good lineage. In his youth there was one thing lacking, this world's goods had not been acquired in his family; the little they had was so small and meager that there was no suggestion of righteousness in selling it all and giving to the poor.

His father, an easy going New Englander, was to all appearances perfectly satisfied with his humble manner of living. He was a good man, but seemed to lack the energy to make an effort.

His wife, on the contrary, was brimful of ambition and at times endeavored to impart some of it to her easy going husband, but finally gave it up as a lost cause. She, then, turned her aspirations to her son.

When James went to college, she was heard to say, as she patted him affectionately on the shoulder, "My son, fill your head, your books,

your room, every corner, with one word, 'ambition.' Keep an overflow of it.''

James, as a boy, was conscious of the limitations that environed his ambition, and, with the spirit that achieves in spite of these barriers, he overcame them all.

When he left the academy which had prepared him for college, it was with the same undaunted courage to win at all hazards. He *must* get there. He soon found that poverty was not the watchword to social success. The best societies seemed open only to men with money, or those distinguished by their ability in popular sports. Owing to this fact, and the desire to be let alone that he might have the time for work, the students were inclined to look upon him as a social nonentity, a hopeless grind.

During his four years at college he bore these trials, not exactly with serenity or humility, for James Sterling was proud as well as ambitious, and weighed with silent contempt the many slights and discourtesies that he daily received from those who singled out the masses of people that dwell in king's houses! The broader outlook that he took on life saved him from a stoical frame of mind. Meantime, the still waters ran deeper and deeper. His professors awarded him much praise for his high standing in all his classes. His subtle

mind regarded these as the power behind his throne of ambition.

After his graduation he secured a situation in a banking house, and by his industrious and honest effort he rose steadily until he became, at the age of thirty-nine, President of the Colonial Bank and Trust Company, which he had entered so courageously years before.

He selected for his friends men with keen financial ability. With studious foresight, he had invested his money in stocks and bonds that would secure and bring him excellent returns. Real estate had been the most lucrative in building the capital which at thirty-nine stamped him as a capitalist and one of the richest men in the state.

James Sterling had ignored fashionable society as much as possible. When his ambition to gain position was satisfied he entered as a novice the untried social circles. At times, he had serious thoughts of getting married, for an amiable wife to brighten his life came as day dreams and evening suggestions. At Palm Beach, or Newport, or California, as yet, Cupid had not touched his heart sufficiently to wish the fair one to share his home. He gazed into the eyes of many a pretty girl waiting for the real thrill, but in spite of all his efforts it never came. Sometimes after spending the evening with a very attractive young lady

there seemed to be something like the warmth of love lurking in his heart, but after a night's rest the morning found him with an excellent appetite and the stock quotations quite obscured the sentimental experience of the previous evening.

As he surveyed himself very carefully in his mirror, he would say, "Jim, you're not such a bad looking fellow after all, are you? Why a bachelor?" Then, straightening up and buttoning his coat would answer his own question, "It ought not to be, James Sterling, but where is the girl? Confound it. I have never failed in anything I determined to obtain. I won't give up the search."

Several days after Elizabeth Harding's episode at Maple Tree Farm, Mr. James Sterling had been invited to attend a lawn party at a near-by town.

Mrs. Gregory, the lady who gave the invitation, was next to Martha Gale, the most important blue blood in the town. She was for years a patron of the Colonial Bank & Trust Company, and although he had been invited to a shore dinner, which seemed more attractive as the day was hot, Mrs. Alfonso Gregory admitted that they needed Mr. Sterling's assistance as well as presence. The object was to raise money to get books for the

new Gregory Library, which, as yet, was unendowed with the necessary material.

"You must come," she said, "for the Lutton people will appreciate your presence as well as myself." She lingered somewhat emphatically on the personal pronoun.

So it came about that James Sterling, who had always studied his personal advancement by a discreet attention to all classes that in any way might help him to reach the goal for which he was striving.

Promptly at four o'clock he stepped from his limousine and presented himself before Mrs. Gregory, his hostess.

"I'm so glad you came, Mr. Sterling. It's such a lovely afternoon, isn't it."

"The scene is ideal," Mr. Sterling smilingly assented as he glanced around over the fresh green of the lawn and a bevy of brightly attired ladies.

He had scarcely finished his scrutiny when a voice at his elbow caused him to turn and he was confronted by a stout breezy looking matron, whose name was Mrs. Jonathan Tarbox. As she extended her hand, she accosted him in a rather loud voice, How do you do, Mr. Sterling. We are so happy to see you, as you know we need all the help possible. Won't you come with me to the

flower booth. Angelina, my daughter, is selling flowers."

It was Angelina Tarbox's first season as a graduate from college. Like her mother she was fair with large blue eyes and hair of the true blonde type; with a well-moulded figure. The inclination to stoutness had been curbed by four years of athletic exercises. She formed a striking picture surrounded by a multitude of June roses, syringas, and other out-of-door blossoms.

Her mother dropped some old time advice to her daughter before leaving for the party. "Now Angelina, my dear, I must not call you Angy any more for it sounds as if you were not out in society. Remember that you are out and quite ready to assume the responsibilities of a young woman who has to make her way in life. I do not expect at this party you will meet many eligible men, but Mrs. Gregory tells me that James Sterling is coming. Now, Angy, I mean Angelina, you may not know that he is the real catch of this season, or any other for that matter. As yet no one has won his affections. You will have many rivals, but just the same it would be a feather in your cap if you were the winner of the prize. I will see that you are properly introduced. He is somewhat older, but for that reason one respects him all the more. Make yourself interesting in

conversation; try books, then sports, and if these fail, be silent. It will show that he prefers to do the talking."

Angelina remained silent during this catalogue advice and at the end she raised her eyes from the study of a photograph which lay on the table by her side.

"Yes, mother, I will," she dutifully replied, but in somewhat of a tired voice, followed by a yawn. "Isn't it time to go?" As Mrs. Tarbox, with true motherly pride, looked into the deep blue eyes of her daughter she felt that the cause was unresistibly won.

Mr. Sterling went through the formal presentation to Miss Tarbox, thinking meanwhile, "she is a promising bud, quite unlike her mother. Angelina has inherited her genius for study directly from her father, but her mother had her bringing up, and, in all other respects heredity pointed to the maternal side."

After a generous purchase of several baskets of flowers, which he at once presented to Miss Tarbox with the liberty of selling them again, Mr. Sterling suggested a walk toward the shady pine grove adjoining the lawn.

Mrs. Tarbox's eyes followed them and she was not unmindful that they were gone some length of time. Upon their return, he left her at the

flower booth and sauntered toward the ice cream and refreshment stand.

While indulging in a lemon ice, his attention was aroused by the arrival of Miss Martha Gale in her carriage drawn by old Dobbin, driven by the former Mr. Sartor Resartus Jenkins. This name occurred to his mother while dusting books in the library of the minister, Rev. Obadiah Leech. With shining buckles on the harness, the quaint attire of Jenkins always caused a ripple of excitement from the bystanders.

Mr. Sterling was quite accustomed to this picture, even to Miss Martha as she stepped from her Victoria always slowly and methodically resting her right foot on the step before placing her left on the curb. She made a graceful picture, and it took no strand of fancy to imagine that she really emerged from a life size painting, "A Lady of the Olden Time."

From the window by the side of his desk, he had often seen Miss Gale in the same careful manner alight from her equipage. To-day he was quite unprepared to observe that she had a companion with her. He quickly finished his lemon ice and he followed the course of Miss Gale, who was paying her respects to Mrs. Gregory and was introducing the young lady at her side.

He tried to avoid a second meeting with Mrs.

Tarbox, but she, unwilling to be diverted from her course, interrupted him.

"Mr. Sterling," she breathlessly exclaimed, "Angelina is beckoning me to bring you to see a bunch of roses which she wishes to give you to stand on your desk to-morrow."

There was no other way but to comply. However, as soon as common courtesy would permit, he bade Miss Tarbox good-bye, and changing his course to avoid another meeting with Angelina's mother, he found himself soon at the side of Miss Gale, who was engaged in conversation with Mrs. Gregory.

The young lady was quietly listening to the conversation. As soon as Mr. Sterling approached and extended his hand to Miss Gale, she greeted him in her cordial manner, and laying her hand on her niece's arm said, "This is my niece, Miss Elizabeth Harding, Mr. Sterling."

In his left hand he held the large bouquet of roses, but with his right he held the small hand of Miss Harding only just for a minute, which gave him the "thrill that comes once in a lifetime."

CHAPTER VI

THE next morning after Mrs. Gregory's lawn fete, James Sterling sat at his breakfast table, his food almost untasted. The morning paper unread lay partly unfolded on the table near his plate. The stock market for once was unnoticed. Jim Sterling, as his associates had for a long time addressed him, sat leaning back in his comfortable Chippendale chair; in his right hand a fork, his eyes fixed on the landscape through an open window.

Mrs. Pipper, the eminently respectable middle-aged woman who sat at the opposite end of the roomy dining table observed this unusual state of abstraction in her employer, and without any hesitation ventured to inquire if Mr. Sterling's coffee was to his taste. To her surprise, Mr. Sterling gave no answer or even an indication that he had heard her speak.

Waiting a few moments, she again questioned him, saying, "Are your eggs too well done? Perhaps the toast is not brown enough. Sophie is inclined to over sleep and hurry breakfast."

James was always ready, if anything like duty presented itself, and the cook's name, Sophie, brought his mind back to the things before him.

He turned his eyes quickly toward Mrs. Pipper, "What's up with Sophie? Has she struck for more wages, or is she going to be married?"

Mrs. Pipper shook her head to disclaim neither of these disasters.

At this point in the conversation, a young girl entered the room from the adjoining hall, nodded and said, "Good morning, Uncle Jim. Don't scold me for being late again. You know the concert was rather long and it took Dick some time to get his car. There was such a rush." She smiled bewitchingly, showing her very deep dimples.

James tried to keep up his role to look serious, if there was the slightest deviation from set rules, but this morning he was inclined to be lenient and with a twinkle in his handsome blue eyes, he gave a rather half-smile.

"I hope you had a fine time Ruth. The Symphony Concerts are really of a very high order."

"Yes, uncle, it was rather late," replied the young girl.

"It is to be hoped Dick will not be sleepy at his desk to-day," and with a more serious voice and leaning forward with his eyes on his plate, he said, "you thoughtless girls must remember that young men must be prompt at business hours."

His niece from daily intercourse with her uncle was not in the least surprised that he supplemented his good natured rebuke with a brief moral lesson. Mrs. Pipper rang for cereal, and while Ruth was pouring over it a plentiful supply of rich cream her eyes rested on her uncle's generous cup of coffee which had scarcely been tasted.

However, before she could remark upon it, James Sterling accosted her kindly with almost an embarrassed look. "By the way, Ruth, have you met Miss Martha Gale's niece, a Miss Harding?" With an insufficient pause for her reply, he continued, "Probably not. I think she has only recently come. Now it seems to me." Here he raised his cup of coffee to his lips and swallowing a little, "It seems to me you ought to call on her right away out of respect for Miss Martha. You know Miss Gale is not only a friend but has been a patron of our bank for many years. I think you had better arrange to call this afternoon."

His niece remained silent and thoughtful for a few moments, then replied, "I have an engagement to play golf with Angy Tarbox at four-thirty, but I will try to go earlier to see Miss Harding."

James Sterling rose from his seat and placing

his hands on his niece's shoulder, rather affectionately, bade her good morning.

As he left the room, Mrs. Pipper who had been unwilling to reconcile herself as to Mr. Sterling's lack of appetite for his breakfast hoped that it did not reflect upon her in any way.

She rose from her seat at the table and with one hand on the coffee perculator, and adjusting her glasses with the other, meanwhile addressing Ruth. "Do you think that your uncle is not feeling well this morning? He ate so very little breakfast."

Ruth knew that Mrs. Pipper's standpoint was an over-conscientious state of mind, causing a sensitiveness which only those that knew her well could understand. As she raised a small piece of buttered toast to her mouth, she replied rather wearily, "Don't worry, Mrs. Pipper, uncle's all right. He just didn't have much appetite."

When James Sterling was a boy, Mrs. Pipper's father was the minister of the church in the small country town where he lived. He had long passed away, leaving his daughter with very little funds at her disposal. Within a year after their marriage, her husband died and she was left with insufficient means for her support. Hence, she was much gratified when Mr. Sterling invited her to come and preside over his home. He had pur-

chased valuable property, which by reason of death had been placed on the market. When he should approach the time when he expected to marry, this palatial old place, if not appealing to his mate, would certainly not retard her expectations in becoming his wife.

Upon reaching his bank that morning, he had walked two miles and had been soberly engaged in thought. After a few preliminary matters were adjusted, he seated himself at his desk and telephoned home.

Ruth, who had been glancing over the Social and Personal Column, dropped the paper and hastened to the 'phone. Perhaps, Dick would join them in golf this afternoon.

"Yes, this is 3265." Then in a loud voice, "It's Ruth, Uncle Jim."

"I have been thinking it over and it would be well to invite Miss Harding to go with us for a ride down to the point for a shore dinner at The Inn. This will be a nice little attention to show her," said James.

Ruth responded, in a rather uncertain tone, "Yes, uncle, I will do so."

"Perhaps," he said, "we ought to have another man to fill up the car. I will speak to Dick on my way home to-night."

At this last suggestion, Ruth's interest seemed

to deepen as indicated by the cheerful ring in her voice. "Yes, it would be rather dull for Miss Harding with only you and me. It's a fine idea. I will go right over and invite her now. Good-bye."

Ruth Sterling was the eldest daughter of his oldest brother who married quite early in life and went West. She had two brothers and one younger sister. Upon one of his visits to his brother's, James had invited Ruth to return with him and finish her education in the East. As he promised to pay all the bills, it was decided to let her go, and she became one of the members of James Sterling's household. She had done much to brighten his home during the school vacations and as our story opens she is beginning her third year at college.

Promptly at four o'clock, Mr. Sterling's Pierce Arrow stood before the front entrance of Miss Martha Gale's residence. Miss Ruth Sterling and Dick Havens occupied the back seat, and James sat alone at the wheel.

Elizabeth Harding who had early learned the value of promptness, taking care of her invalid father, was waiting. Alighting from the car Mr. Sterling ran up the steps and spying Miss Harding at the open window, he tapped but lightly with the brass knocker. She opened the door at

once and greeted the handsome man who stood politely with hat in hand.

"You haven't been waiting long, Mr. Sterling, for I kept watch from the window for fully ten minutes."

"Thank you, Miss Harding. You certainly are very considerate," replied Mr. Sterling. "In the business world promptness is called a necessity if not a virtue, but in the social etiquette I was not certain as any such rule prevailed."

"Perhaps not," she laughingly assented, "but excuse me a minute, I must say good-bye to Aunt Martha."

She went lightly through the spacious hall to the library where her aunt had sought refuge from the heat. She sat in an easy chair before an open window studying the stock market in a Boston paper.

"Good-bye, aunty," said Elizabeth as she kissed her. "I don't know when we will be home. Please don't sit up for me."

Aunt Martha returned the kiss and laying down the newspaper and removing her glasses replied, "Very well, my dear, I shall not worry for James Sterling will not keep you out late, out of respect for my wishes."

Replacing her glasses she, very shortly, removed them again to wipe the moisture which

always gathers when she allowed herself to think of what might have been had she only been younger and James Sterling the older. Perhaps the casket that contained her early romance might have been deep enough to be forgotten.

Elizabeth rejoined Mr. Sterling and they walked out together to the car. After presenting Miss Harding to Dick, James assisted her to the front seat and crawled in behind the wheel at her side.

He turned to her, saying, "Perhaps, you won't mind riding with me. I may need some new points in driving as I hear that you are quite proficient in running a car."

"By no means," she replied, "the short experience I've had would not coincide with that statement. I fear, too, I shall improve rapidly as dear Aunt Martha has taken to going with me and she does not like to drive at all fast and has so many perplexing suggestions to offer."

"How can that be? Does she lack faith in your ability to drive?" asked James.

"I really don't know, but I'm inclined to think that it is her lack of faith which began after I had been out for a longer drive than usual and for want of gasoline was detained and reached home just before a thunderstorm. Aunty is always in fear during a storm and she was anxious about me."

"May I ask what happened?" said James. "Were you far away from supplies?"

"O no—or rather. Yes," she added. I was far away from any public place, but I stopped at a farm house," and she hesitated a moment. "A farm hand brought me the needed supply," and she halted as a vision of her knight came fully before her.

Mr. Sterling, with his natural alertness, noticed the pause, and feeling sure that there was some cause for it, turned suddenly toward her asking, "Is your narrative complete?" As she still remained silent, he continued, "How could it end well without a fairy or sturdy knight to appear and bring you home." Just a farm laborer does not give the right coloring to such an adventure."

"True," she answered, and still with a far-away look in the deep brown eyes, "It does seem unromantic."

Ruth Sterling who had been entirely absorbed in her companion, now remarked, "Did you telephone about supper at the Rest View, Uncle Jim?"

Her uncle nodded his head and resumed his conversation with the young lady at his side.

"Your home is in Vermont, Miss Harding?"

"Yes," she replied, "but I have been away so much at school and then visiting Aunt Martha,

that I feel home is any place. My father is an invalid and a great care to my mother. I feel almost wicked to be away so much, but I intend to reform after aunty and I return from Europe. We are just going over for two months."

"Indeed," responded James, "How fortunate; I, too, am going over just for a change and recreation. Perhaps, I may be of some help to you ladies."

It was Elizabeth's turn now to stare at Mr. Sterling. "How very nice!" she exclaimed. "Aunty, I am sure, will be very much pleased, as she counts you as a friend."

"It is indeed a pleasure to do anything for Miss Gale," he answered.

James Sterling was a kind, unselfish man. His ambition was satisfied and no one was turned away disappointed. The strong personality of the man as depicted in his sturdy, broad shoulders; his finely shaped head, well covered with jet black hair; kindness and benevolence in every feature. He was in every way a self-made man, but in his usual spirit of self-abnegation, he did not care for the praise of man.

His nature did not grow miserly as his possessions increased. He gave more abundantly to charities. His youthful experiences wrote the keynote to which the sympathetic chords of his char-

acter were kept in tune. Unlike the rich man who never knew poverty and has no conception of the limitations that poverty brings. He knew at a glance the psychological moment that the wedge should enter; the stumblingblock that hinders success. He knew that the self-made man to wealth remembers first in his legacies his native town; the building of a library, a home for the poor; his church and the cemetery. This man's son whose wants from birth have been fully supplied his road to understanding leads him to endow his college, his clubs and hospital.

Whenever his mother, as was her custom, took his face between her hands imprinted a kiss upon his forehead and she would say, "James, my son, you have done well. You have redeemed the reputation of the family."

After reaching the place where they were to have supper, Ruth and Elizabeth walked on the beach while James and Dick wandered about talking with their friends who were many at this summer resort.

"By the way, Jim," said Mr. Seaman, a manufacturer of wicker furniture, "who is that charming, pretty girl walking over there with your niece?" He pointed with his forefinger to the girls.

James was in the act of lighting his pipe and

appeared not to notice the remark of Mr. Seaman, but said, "How about that note, Mr. Seaman? Do you want it renewed?"

This changed the subject and brought forth a brisk conversation. However, during it all James was watching the girl in white with a blue sweater thrown lightly over her arm and the golden brown hair, which grew even more golden as the sultry sun kissed it, lighting up the rich color in her cheeks and eyes.

When they had finished the shore dinner, they all walked the beach.

"How delightful it is this warm day, Mr. Sterling. I suppose you come here very often," inquired Elizabeth.

"Yes," replied James, "I get refreshment here. You, I fancy, have plenty of resource within yourself without needing these little changes."

"Why should you think that, Mr. Sterling?" and she looked inquiringly at him.

He returned the gaze with a smile and said, "Just because you are not restless. You seem so peaceful. One is so comfortable in your presence. Pardon my frankness," he added, as a look of embarrassment crowded her face.

"I fear that you jump at conclusions without giving the subject due consideration. I beg you to reconsider that last remark," said Elizabeth.

"I feel sure it is undue. I refuse to back-water, Miss Harding. My intuitions of persons are usually correct. You see I have been in business for years. All the psychology I know has not been learned from books, but by glimpses and contact with the people themselves. After college, I went directly into business and I kept at it diligently until within a few years. I was obliged to in order to benefit my mother and family, without any reflection on my father. He was born with the disposition for not doing and with no exertion on his part he was sure it would all be given him in due season. But that is past, and I am resolved not to make business my first study any more, as there is something greater and sweeter in life for me and I resolve to find it."

Elizabeth's eyes were cast down. She had been listening attentively to his self-made history. He seemed so strong, so brave, so true. As she was silent and thinking he had been a little too sudden in enlightening her in regard to himself, he said, "Pardon me, Miss Harding, I did not intend to bore you with the autobiography of my life, but you are really to blame for it all. Your quiet composure and rare art of listening tempted me beyond my power of resistance."

"Do not say that, Mr. Sterling, for I certainly have been entertained by your kindness in re-

lating your personal history. I feel better acquainted with you for your frank talk. If you wish me to be equally honest, may I ask your age? You seem in some ways older than I think you are."

James laughed, and laying his hand lightly on her, replied, "Just thirty-nine last June."

"I am not surprised," answered Elizabeth. "You look younger. How can you be the president of a bank at that age? I thought it was older men they chose for that responsible position."

"They usually do, but I began so early in life and grew up with the bank that it is really no credit that I am the president," replied James.

With pleasant intercourse the evening passed. At an early hour Elizabeth was left at Miss Gale's door.

That night, James Sterling sat up late, thinking and resolving the best course to pursue in his new measure for life's happiness. He did not quite feel sure of himself. "Is there one thing that I cannot get?" he said, "but it shall be my purpose to gain the affection of this lovely girl. To be sure my experience in love affairs is limited. The magnitudes and responsibilities of success, which confronted me, are greater, yet not unsurmountable." He read her character as one of strength and evident obedience to duty. Her

womanly refinement with no desire to overstep the line of demarcation which is and always has been dimly drawn to separate man from woman, and apparently without the foibles and vanities which many of the so-called weaker sex use to lure the stronger animal part of man; also ignoring the tendency of the modern girl to adopt the long established small vices of the opposite sex as a primitive right to themselves. She certainly was different from the girls who attempted mannish ways and failed to hit the target. Their deception hurt. No, Elizabeth Harding was different. Her sweet womanly qualities, so infrequent now, were fascinating and he felt sure these qualities caused the thrill which in vain he had honestly tried to find.

Will his desire for happiness over-rule the clean-cut whispering of his conscience? Will the corner stone be sufficiently enduring, or will it crumble with the handling?

CHAPTER VII

JAMES STERLING was a man of quick decisions and he did not hesitate to make his plans known to the vice-president of the bank.

"I truly feel the need of a rest and rather hurriedly decided to go abroad for a couple of months."

Mr. Corruth looked slightly startled, more perhaps on account of the length of his proposed absence rather than the absence itself. Two weeks had been the longest interval away from business that James Sterling had taken for years; in fact, ever since Mr. Corruth had been connected with the bank. However, he quickly recovered from his surprise and cheerfully responded, "Certainly, Mr. Sterling. You are entitled to a much longer vacation than you are planning. May I inquire when you intend to start?"

"Just as soon as I can arrange it. I much prefer to be on the water early in July. One is almost sure of a peaceful voyage. I have never encountered a tempest at sea," replied Mr. Sterling.

Soon all the officials of the bank were aware of their president's intentions.

The day after the dinner at the shore with Elizabeth Harding in which she had played a con-

spicuous part in the thoughts of James Sterling, Miss Martha Gale might have been seen approaching the two-story red brick building with its brass tablet on the right side of the entrance and bearing the inscription, "The Colonial Bank & Trust Company."

The president's office was enclosed with long wide windows, protected by small iron bars. He was sitting at his desk with head bowed over sundry papers. It would appear to the keenest observer that he was entirely unmindful to things happening about him. Without appearing to lift an eyelid he was aware that Miss Gale, seated in her coupé with Sartor Resartus Jenkins holding the easy rein over Old Dobbin, would soon alight in her graceful manner and enter the bank. Mr. Sterling did not move, but continued to be absorbed in his work, knowing that it was her fashion to wait for the preliminary information from the colored factotum, in the grey uniform and cap.

"If Mr. Sterling is not too busy, I would like to confer with him."

She would wait until he inquired of Mr. Sterling and stepping into the waiting room seated herself in a high back chair.

Promptly the gentleman came back and bowing

low said, "Mr. Sterling will be pleased if you will step into his private office."

Miss Gale rose and with measured steps followed the man who walked slightly in advance, with an occasional side twist of the upper part of his body and a slight gesture of his left arm indicating the direction of the president's office. This had been the procedure for many years and would continue so as long as Miss Martha Gale visited the bank. Everyone seemed to understand from the president down that Miss Gale was an unusually highbred lady. When about six feet from his desk, Miss Martha halted and somewhat ceremoniously waited for the first signs of recognition from Mr. Sterling.

Almost simultaneously with her action he rose with spontaneous alacrity, his handsome countenance beaming with cordiality as he extended his hand.

"Good morning, Miss Gale, I am pleased to see you," and drawing a near office chair in close proximity to his own with the invitation that she be seated. Before seating herself Miss Martha carefully spread the folds of her dainty gray muslin more advantageously to the requirements of a graceful figure.

"Thank you, Mr. Sterling. I find myself in the best of health."

After this pleasing announcement she drew a gray beaded bag from her wrist and opened it. She removed a small gray bordered handkerchief, and brushed it lightly across the tip of her patrician nose.

With a slow moderated tone of voice, she said, "Are you sure, Mr. Sterling, that it is perfectly convenient for me to take a few minutes of your valuable time this morning?"

"Perfectly, perfectly sure, Miss Martha. I assure you it is always a pleasure to do anything for you," he replied.

Thus reassured Miss Martha continued, "I am preparing to go abroad for July and August and it is quite essential that I look after the business part of my home affairs. You see," she added with a gracious smile, "you have quite spoiled me. You have always been so kind and helpful to me."

The president listened most attentively while she continued in an apologetic tone, "I am not endowed by nature with a talent for conferring in stocks and bonds," and in a lighter tone, "perhaps I might have cultivated a taste in that direction—at least have been more educated in it."

James was always an attentive listener. He

sat bolt upright, his hands resting on the arms of his chair. As she finished rather playfully this assertion, he revolved in his chair and leaned slightly towards her as he replied, "I feel that is an injustice to yourself. You ought to reconsider a bit. Allow me to make the statement that I do not know a lady that has a keener knowledge of safe investments and of more aptitude in the value of promptness and I may say, speedy action when the market is ripe, than yourself."

Miss Gale looked slightly flushed and more than pleased at this bit of commendation from one so highly esteemed. Her apparent shyness vanished and leaning forward rested one elbow on his desk and said, "Thank you, but I do not feel that I merit this praise and in the future I will have to think hard in order to keep up to the high regard that you are giving me."

She dropped her eyes while speaking, but as she raised them slowly she looked frankly and steadily into his face, asking him where she had better invest her July dividends.

Now, Mr. Sterling knew from long experience, not only with Miss Gale, but others of the female sex, that she had already decided upon the subject and only from politeness or in deference to his

masculine prerogative in judgment that his counsel and advice was solicited.

Resting his head on his hand, he gazed out of the window and waited in silence for a few moments, then said, "Shall we do business through our usual brokers, T. & T. Co.?"

"Certainly, Mr. Sterling. I consider they use good judgment and are very obliging."

He nodded his head affirmatively and waited for her to speak.

"Do you approve of Car and Foundry, Mr. Sterling?" asked Miss Gale.

"Very much so, Miss Gale. Their record seems good."

"What about Tel. & Tel. Co.?" inquired Miss Gale.

"First class, first class, Miss Gale."

"Would you advise adding a few shares to my United States Steel?" questioned Miss Gale.

"Certainly; nothing better, Miss Martha. If that is your desire, I will call up the T. & T. Co.?"

Mr. Sterling knew there would be no vacillating, for Miss Martha's mind was made up. She had probably given it tentative thought; very likely had mentioned it to the Almighty in prayer.

The president reached for his telephone and summoned the broker to buy for Miss Martha

Gale 50 shares of Car & Foundry, 50 shares of Tel. & Tel. and 60 shares of U. S. Steel.

Miss Gale's face brightened with a look of relief from a great burden. She restored her silk scarf about her shoulders and said, "I am so indebted to you again, Mr. Sterling. Your advice in these trying situations is invaluable. I doubt if I ever could come to any satisfactory conclusion in these business matters without your aid."

The president knew full well that an attempt to clear himself on the subject would be futile, so he turned the conversation into another channel which meant more to his peace of mind than Miss Gale's financial troubles.

"When do you sail, Miss Martha? Your niece, Miss Harding, informed me that you both were going abroad for the summer." James Sterling was never a prevaricator but directly approached the truth. "I also informed her that I was to take my two months' vacation abroad."

"What is the name of your steamer? Have you received your tickets?" he questioned.

"Delightful," responded Miss Gale. "Our steamer is the Aquitania. Perhaps you will go on the same steamer. I hope it may be the same date as ours." Miss Gale exhibited much warmth of feeling as she spoke.

"Thank you. It certainly would add greatly to my pleasure to be in the company of yourself and your attractive niece. I will wire immediately to secure passage on the Aquitania."

Miss Gale extended her hand in parting and a close observer might have detected a quickness in her usual slow walk as she passed from the president's room to her carriage.

CHAPTER VIII

THE day after his satisfactory interview with Abe Jones, Ernest Maysfield decided to take a trip to town in an effort to find the owner of the automobile that bore the number 1555 Mass. The day, like the previous one, was not favorable for haying. The somber and gray clouds hung heavy and low over the tobacco and hay fields. They almost touched the surface of the still small pond that lay at the foot of the hill. In the sunlight its waters sparkled like a gem on the bosom of Mother Earth and small shrubs and sapplings formed a setting of emerald green. The surrounding pastures were dotted with a summer colony of black and white goats nibbling the tufted grass that covered stones and decayed tree stumps. The tall trees, like changeless sentinels, formed a background that semi-circled the pond. It was perfectly agreeable to Uncle John that Ernest should take the Ford and enjoy the day in town.

"But Uncle," he explained, "I may like to keep on to Sefton. I would like to see somebody there."

"All right, Erny, all right," and with a side

glance at his wife, who was placing a huge covered dish of hot pancakes on the table, said, "I hope you will find her at home. Quite a trip if you don't."

Ernest, who was finishing a bountiful supply of oatmeal with sliced bananas and golden cream, did not raise his eyes from his plate and returned no answer to his uncle's sallies.

"By the way," rejoined Uncle John, "are there any extra tubes in the car in case of a blow-out?"

Ernest looked up and replied, "Certainly, uncle, I will take good care of the Flivver. Rest assured of that."

"That reminds me," said Uncle John, "of a mighty good joke on your Aunt Leddy. I remarked to her that Hart Haten had a new Ford car. She rebuked me gently by explaining that it was not a Ford car. It must be some French car because they called it a Flivver."

Uncle John roared over the memory of a good joke on Leddy, and Ernest almost choked with laughter as he was finishing the last spoonful of his cereal. Aunt Leddy sat serenely refilling with coffee the generous cup allotted to her husband. She was too serious minded ever to perpetrate a joke, consequently never took one. One of her most frequent quotations was a reminder to her

husband, that for every idle word a man shall speak, he must give account hereafter. Her husband laughingly asserted "that the account book must be chucked full by this time. The Lord has made me just as I am and I can't look through a glass darkly."

"Oh, John!" she would urge, "do not be irreverent or misuse the sacred Scripture." This thought would bring tears to her eyes which her husband would irreverently call "dry tears."

After breakfast Ernest showed signs of an early start. "I probably won't be back before late this evening," he said as he waved good-bye to Uncle and Aunt as they stood watching him until he was quite out of sight at the top of the hill. As he was passing the gasoline shop of Abner Jones he saw that person in the window waving his hand.

"By George," ejaculated Abe, "if there ain't that young Maysfield fellow with Old Maysfield's Ford. Out early. I wonder where he's going. Likely to the city for he's all dressed up Sunday best."

Abe returned his well-filled clay pipe to his mouth, and leaning back on his chair contentedly resumed looking at the pictures in the *Ladies' Home Journal* which a kind woman had thrown at

his door as she was passing in her auto. His wife was very busy preparing breakfast and interjected a few domestic remarks as she passed from pantry to stove. Her husband looked so passive and happy, turning over the leaves of the magazine that it irritated her. If he had shown any signs of hurry or impatience for his breakfast it would have in a measure solaced her nerves. Maria Jane never liked cooking or the drudgery of housework. She coughed nervously at intervals, but these signals brought no sign that her husband took any notice of her or what she was doing.

"What are you looking at, Abe Jones? You certainly have an easy time with no set hours while I drudge from morning till night," said his wife.

Abe made no reply but puffed a little stronger at his clay pipe.

"You have no thought of me. I've told you time and time again that that nasty pipe makes me sick before breakfast. It's bad enough any time, but it's worse on an empty stomach," continued his wife.

Abe removed his pipe and stopped turning the leaves long enough to say, "Wal, Maria Jane, the

old sayin' is, 'What's sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose.' " Abe chuckled to himself.

Maria Jane sniffed as she proceeded to place a wrinkled cloth on the table, snapping it vigorously, several times before smoothing it out.

"Yes," she asserted, "that young Maysfield is a doubly smart fellow off early at his business. Oh!" she sighed, "I might have had a smart man myself, instead of a lazy shiftless one. I——"

Here Abe interrupted his wife's tirade by softly singing the hymn "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing." Crash and a plate lay in fragments on the floor. Abe threw down the magazine, put his half finished pipe into his pocket and walked to the sink where he washed his hands. As he passed the broken plate he said sorrowfully, "My mother would call that wilful waste."

Maria Jane, who really did not care to lose her crockery knowing it would be some time before she had a new set, refrained from speaking again but took her place at the breakfast table. Abe followed and without looking at his wife whose features had resumed a certain placidity of expression, he bowed his head to ask the usual blessing, "For all we have received and are about to receive we ask thy blessing."

At the registrar's office Ernest found the owner

of the eagerly sought for car. It belonged to Miss Martha Gale, of Sefton, Massachusetts. That town was about twenty miles from the city. Ernest drove along through pleasant scenery and excellent highways. So eager was he to find the whereabouts of Miss Gale that it had not occurred to him what might be his excuse for calling upon her. As he faced this thought it really seemed an intrusion quite presumptuous.

However, he passed on hoping for some solution of the problem. As he entered the attractive village of Sefton he watched out for some one of whom he might inquire the direction to the residence of Miss Gale. Suddenly, a small boy on a bicycle appeared from a crossroad and alighted near. Ernest stopped his car and accosted the boy. He knew from experience that a young boy always knows the town in which he lives.

"Good morning, fine fellow," he said. "Could you tell me where Miss Martha Gale lives?"

The boy tipped his hat, looked attentively at Ernest for a minute, then replied, "Sure I can. She lives on Gale Avenue just about three-quarters of a mile from here. It's a big house painted white with yellow trimmings. Her grandfather built it. He was a film-has-o-pist, or something like that. Dad says that he gave away lots and

lots of money. His hair was red and he didn't like it so he shaved it off and wore a jet black wig."

Ernest started his engine as the little fellow called out, "Turn to the right and the next street is Gale Avenue."

In a few minutes he drove up in front of the spacious grounds of Gale Mansion. The shutters were drawn and the place bore a deserted appearance. Ernest alighted and walked slowly up the driveway not attempting to inquire at the house. He followed the walk around to the rear, in search of the caretaker.

Hearing some kind of a sound emerging from the barn, he pushed open the door. He could see a man at the end of the building evidently looking for garden tools. He took from the closet a rake and then a hoe. It was Mr. Jenkins who was searching for his tools. At the end of the large room next to where Ernest was standing stood two vehicles; a carriage and an automobile. Both were covered with a heavy white cloth. The number of the car was 1555. He gave a quick jump for he could almost see the girl as she looked in the car. So absorbed was he in the mental picture that he did not notice the approach of Mr. Jenkins who grasping a hoe and rake in one hand

was shuffling across the floor, whistling softly, his gaze inadvertently following each object on his way to the large sliding door. He did not notice the figure standing before the car until within a half-dozen feet of him.

"How d'y do," he said in an attempt at off-hand politeness. Ernest turned about and took a step nearer the old man.

"Excuse me for intruding. I am motoring some distance and it looked so cool and inviting under these trees that I left my car outside and wandered in. Perhaps I might ask for a drink of water. The day is warm."

By the time Ernest had finished speaking, Jenkins, who had been studying his visitor closely, decided he was a gentleman and at once removed his faded shapeless straw hat. Its only claim to respectability was the black ribbon. Jenkin's company manners were now alert. He dropped his rake and hoe and preceding to a faucet near by began running the water. He gave a tumbler of the cool, clear water to his visitor who drank freely, handing back the empty tumbler with a "Thank you, sir. It was very refreshing. Fine water you have here."

"Can't be beat," responded Jenkins.

"I understand a Miss Gale lives here. A beautiful place. Quite old, isn't it?" added Ernest.

"Yes sir, it's very old and Miss Martha thinks a pile of it, as it belonged to her grandfather first and then to her father. She never wants things changed about the place," said Jenkins.

"But I see," said Ernest "that she runs an automobile," and he pointed to the Dodge car.

"Oh, no, sir, she never runs that. She got that for her niece, Miss Lisbeth Harding," replied Jenkins.

Ernest had a feeling that all things were moving in his way. His visit would not be futile.

"Yes, I see Miss Gale is an old lady," remarked Ernest.

"No," said Jenkins, "not exactly what you'd call old. I've lived here nigh thirty years and she's just about the same age as when I first come. You may know that some ladies never grow old."

Jenkins had too much respect for his lady employer to even make a humorous remark about her age, but Ernest was not slow in seeing a thread of fun in his statement.

"Does her niece always live with her?" asked Ernest.

"By no means," answered Jenkins. "She only visits her."

"Her home is not here then," said Ernest.

"No, she lives with her family in Montpelier, Vermont. You see, her father is an invalid and when her mother, who is Miss Gale's sister, comes to visit here, why Miss Lisbeth has to take care of her father," continued Jenkins.

"She must be a very good girl to do that," replied Ernest.

"You bet she is," reëchoed Jenkins. "None better. Miss Gale is never so happy as when she's here."

"Is she through school?" asked the young man.

"Yes, sir. She graduated at Vassar College last year," replied Jenkins proudly.

Ernest had plied so many questions that he decided to leave the subject.

"You have a beautiful garden. May I walk in it?" asked Ernest.

Jenkins was never happier than giving information, but it suddenly dawned to him that this young man was a perfect stranger. Was it quite right and wise to treat him in so friendly a manner? A sudden suspicion entered his mind that perhaps his interviewer might not be honest after all. His manner changed and as if by mental suggestion, Ernest turned the conversation to the cultivation of flowers, which were all about them

as they entered the garden. This turn of conversation seemed to disarm any suspicion and they talked long of gardening.

"My father was a gardener on a big estate in California and I have always followed that line of work," said Jenkins.

"Indeed," said Ernest, "My father is a minister and his only recreation is working in his garden."

Jenkins who had stopped to pluck some withered blossoms heard the mention of the ministerial parent and his suspicions were again allayed.

"Your success with roses is wonderful," remarked Ernest, as they stood by a huge bed. "May I pick one?" he added as he stooped to do so. "The young lady must enjoy them. My sister always likes roses."

"Yes, Miss Lisbeth does gather a great many for Miss Martha's rooms. She's a picture in a garden hat with a basket on her arm, but no roses are as bright as her eyes and as pink as her cheeks."

Ernest grew almost breathless as Jenkins talked. As he paused Ernest said in a careless manner, appearing to examine a small wild rose

bush, "If she is like that I should think that there would be danger of Miss Gale losing her."

"Yes," slowly ejaculated Mr. Jenkins, "there is great danger. I suppose she's engaged already."

"To whom?" asked Ernest.

"One of our finest men about here—Mr. James Sterling. He is only about thirty-eight and is president of the bank, and they say he's as rich as Crœsus. Miss Gale sets a store on him, but it'll be pretty hard to part with Miss Lisbeth. But then, she'll live right near here, about a mile away. Mr. Sterling's got a fine place next to Miss Martha's. It's the finest in the town," said Jenkins.

Ernest felt hot. His temperature had gone down rapidly as Jenkins poured forth this last information. He knew his color had left him, and, fearing that the sharp eyes of Jenkins would notice the change, he slowly moved to a huge zinnia bed, just opposite the roses.

"What brilliant colors," he remarked. "Where do you get the seeds?"

Just then, Esmerelda's voice was shouting from the back porch for Mr. Jenkins to come in to dinner.

Jenkins turned and apologetically said, "That

girl is always in such a hurry. You see, Miss Martha and Miss Lisbeth have gone to Europe for two months and Elda gets kind of bossy. She is one of them colored gals that come from Alabama."

Ernest respectfully removed his hat, thanking Mr. Jenkins because he had helped quench his thirst and assuring him that it was a privilege to see his garden.

"I hope I have not hindered you too long. Good morning."

Jenkins again held his hat in his hands saying, "Good-day. Be sure if you come this way again to call and see me."

So they parted, and Ernest, weary in spirit, reached his car. The tale had been told. He little knew there were other surprises in store for him.

CHAPTER IX

THE summer was waning and Ernest Maysfield and Mildred, his sister, were preparing to return to their home. Ernest had spent practically the whole summer at Uncle John's while his sister had been there but two weeks. She felt reluctant to leave her father whose vacation from his parish work was very brief. Aunt Polly was going to visit an old school friend who lived on the Cape and duty called Mildred home.

Ernest had grown husky and brown with helping on the farm. He stood erect, preserving his soldierly bearing. An intimate friend with keen discernment might have discovered a serious line in his naturally cheerful expression, which had been somewhat of a drawing card that lured his friends and acquaintances.

"Not quite happy, old fellow," had been the exclamation of Jack Hart, his old neighbor and schoolmate. "Cheer up, my boy, the war is ended. Drop it." This explanation of his facial appearance with the accompanying advice did not bring the prompt results that Jack intended. With a surprised gaze at his friend he continued,

"It's too dull for you in the country. You need some life around you. Nature is not the best restorative to good spirits. I should really go crazy, by Gad, I should, to hear nothing but the insects buzzing by day and the whippoorwills or hoot owls at night. It makes me shiver to think of it. The society of girls is what you need most. That will rub off that doleful expression on your mug."

Ernest was conscious that he did not wear the happy-go-lucky expression as of old. Since the day of his visit to Sefton and his interview with Miss Martha Gale's gardener, Sartor Resartus Jenkins, life had taken on a somber hue. That brief dream was over and he resolved to forget and try once more to reëstablish his friendship with Evelyn Durand.

He replied to her letter asking him to come and see her, and the morning they were to leave Maple Tree Farm, he had received another from her. It contained an invitation to supper and a dance.

"You certainly will not forget to come, Erny, because I do long to see you. We were once the best of friends. What has happened that you neglect me now? If it is my fault you must forgive me. Whatever it is let us make up and be friends at least." These words were so like her old self.

She had always been sorry for any little misunderstanding in the past and now she was the same. Her character could not be so much changed after all, he thought. The present condition might be due merely to surrounding influences, which had changed to modern ways. He would believe in her and prevail upon her to leave off those things which must certainly injure her, and detract from the perfect confidence and esteem he desired to have for the girl he would single out for his wife. He could hardly wait for the time when he would be at home and could retrace the steps which followed his first visit to Evelyn.

The morning was bright, and the sunshine heightened the glow of the brilliant autumn foliage, the keen brisk air lent vigor and satisfaction. Uncle John spoke in his usual cheerful manner, but an occasional pause in his ready speech might have brought a suspicion in the minds of those that knew him well, that these symptoms were akin to depression of spirit. Aunt Leddy preserved her composure in her outward expression, but a perceptible nervousness showed in her quick turning from one subject to another as she made ready a basket of dainties which she knew brother Amos would enjoy.

"By the way, Erny," said Uncle John, whose

volubility was frequently interrupted by his wife's carefully worded messages, "You and Milly must come down in chestnutting time. You know I have some of the best trees anywhere round. When I was in the Millet pasture yesterday, I took a good squint at the trees and, by George, they are full of promise. Nat Stevens told me there was some kind of a blight on his'n and he didn't expect a blame chestnut. I'll be sure to send in some hickory nuts the first chance I get. My trees are the best of any round and they always yield a full harvest."

"John," interrupted his wife, "don't forget to put in a bag of those russet apples. Amos, you know, is very fond of them."

"Surely, Leddy, I know he sets a store by them. Will there be room in the car for a bag of turnips?"

"Uncle John," remarked Ernest, "please don't send all the harvest to father. Keep some for yourself."

His uncle patted him on the back as he ejaculated, "Don't you worry my son. You were my partner this summer and you deserve a share in this bountiful harvest."

At last Heaven's bounties were all packed in, the good-byes were said and they disappeared

from view over the crest of the hill. John Mayfield dropped his hands to his side and said as he followed his wife into the kitchen, "Well, the best of friends must part," adding as he reached for his hat which hung on a peg back of the door, "But, by George, Leddy, it will be kind of lonely, won't it?"

Not waiting for his wife to reply to this sorrowful suggestion, he started for the barn, there to soothe, if not to hide, the emotions which rankled in his bosom. On his way to the barn he paused at the entrance of the woodshed where he spied a long full ear of red corn. Taking it from the nail he returnd to the kitchen, with the regretful utterance, "I forgot to give Erny this ear of corn. It will take the prize at the fair this fall. Of course, I always get the first prize for my corn and I wanted Amos to see that God's country yields other things besides hayseeds and fools. He might get a good text for his Sunday sermon. There is so much said about the ignorance of the country folks, but, by George, I've seen ignorance regarding God's handiwork in the country by some of those city fellows."

Aunt Leddy, who had been wiping her glasses with the corner of her gingham apron, interrupted her husband with her soft modulated voice,

"Don't, John, pray, don't use so many bad words. You know as well as I do that man must give an account of every idle word he speaks—and I think it will keep some pretty busy, John." She shook her head, adding, "I must mould my bread. It should be ready for the oven."

Uncle John held the ear of corn high above his head, then, with an almost affectionate touch said, "That ear of corn, to my mind, exceeds in grandeur the highest building they have in Glenford and to think those blamed fools don't see anything in it."

Aunt Leddy held up her forefinger warningly, but her husband refused to see it as he continued, "Just to prove my statement that the ignorance of those city chaps is astounding. You know when Erny's friend Jack was here and wanted to help set out strawberries, we gave him a basket of plants at one end of the bed with no other instructions than to set them out. After a while I went across the garden to see how he was coming on, and, by George, the blasted fool——" Leddy stopped her work of kneading the dough of her weekly baking of rye bread to glance reprovingly at her husband. She said nothing as she knew from experience that it would do no good. John was working off his nervousness and like many

others, in his efforts to enhance his own success, was making light of others. Uncle John intended that no interruptions should cut him off from finishing his story. He had removed his hat and laying the corn in a chair, he glanced into the small mirror hanging between the two windows. Reaching for a comb which lay on the ledge of the wainscotting, he combed his hair remarking, "Leddy, you don't seem to want to hear my story out. You interrupted me three times." Now, as he thrust his hat sidewise on his head, "That city fellow had set out all them plants — bottom side up."

Uncle John burst into a hilarious laugh, which sounded unnatural and jarred not a little on his wife's nerves. John picked up the red ear of corn and passing into the shed, hung it on the peg. Stopping a minute in the doorway he called back to his wife, "Say, Leddy. What time will dinner be ready to-day?"

He stood listening with one hand resting on the frame work of the door, his head half-turned, until the answer came, "At the usual hour, John."

"All right, Leddy. I've got to go over to Abner Jones' to get a bolt fixed on the cattle yoke. I guess, I'll have plenty of time."

Uncle John drew his hat down on his forehead, and placing his hands in his capacious overalls

turned into the well-worn path leading to the barn softly whistling, "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love."

Silence reigned between Ernest and his sister for some time after leaving Maple Farm. The days spent there since their earliest remembrance were the happiest they had ever known. Uncle John and Aunt Leddy had been like second parents and when the time came to say good-bye, the effort to be cheerful produced an excitement, which had its rebound in serious thoughts.

Mildred was the first to break the silence by saying, "I'm always sorry when the time comes to go back to town."

This remark was accompanied by a long drawn sigh. "Uncle John is so naturally jolly and Aunt Leddy so naturally sweet, that the combination is very drawing, isn't it?"

Ernest responded with a sigh and turning somewhat uneasily about as if to change the subject, said eagerly, "Yes, yes, but father and Aunt Polly are waiting at the other end of the line," and he somewhat drawled his next words, "We have other friends too." Then suddenly quickening his speech asked, "Don't you ever see Evelyn nowadays?"

Mildred hesitated a moment, then replied in an unresponsive tone, "Yes sometimes." She looked

away into the distance as if the subject of conversation was not interesting her at all.

Ernest looked at her, then followed with another personal interrogation, "May I ask why you disregard old friendships in this way?"

Mildred buttoned more closely the big collar of her heavy coat. Then as her brother waited her reply she said, "I would rather not answer that question, Erny," and she dwelt somewhat pathetically on her brother's name.

"But why?" demanded her brother a trifle impatiently. "When I went away I left you the best of friends and you should certainly tell me what is the cause of the present coolness between you two."

"Well, Erny, if I must, I will tell you. Evelyn has changed. She does things of which I do not approve. Besides her friends are not the kind I have been taught to call refined people. They fill me with disgust, and if she prefers a vulgar set of friends to me and my friends, she has made her choice, and I shall keep away from her."

Ernest had never heard his sister assert herself in such positive terms. Still, not contented to drop the subject, he said, "Possibly, what you say is true, but there may be some excuse for her faults. Remember that she has been abroad where customs that we do not care to adopt or

not even in sympathy with, are accepted by many otherwise conservative people. It might be well for us to consider circumstances and endeavor to extend a salutary influence upon her. Evelyn is neither stupid or obstinate; in other words she is not beyond recall."

"Yes, I know," Mildred hurriedly interrupted, "But father, mother and Aunt Polly have always said that "Evil communications corrupt good manners."

She paused waiting for her brother to reply. His next words were carefully emphatic. "True, that is their creed. But if we never come in contact with evil how can we hope to reform the same?" Then slowly placing his arm around her shoulder he said, "Mildred dear, you are too well grounded in Christian graces to embrace any kind of wrongdoing. Why not add one more virtue to the list and try to win over or really win Evelyn back to the old standard of better life? Please try, sister dear." His clear gray eyes looked pleadingly into hers and she reluctantly consented to use her influence with Evelyn Durand. Deep in her heart she was conscious of only one word—failure.

CHAPTER X

SINCE Ernest Maysfield had returned to his home he had been seriously considering what kind of business he would take up. His father had always encouraged his own profession, a minister of the Gospel. His son had heretofore felt that his life had not been sufficiently consecrated for this work. He hesitated, for in the first place the spiritual inspiration seemed lacking, and secondly the financial support for young men was in most cases very small. Would he be justified in taking unto himself a wife with only a meager support? And lastly, would the girl he intended to marry be a success as a minister's wife? He flatly asked himself these questions again and again. Would Evelyn Durand care to unite herself with a man who had chosen this sacred profession for his life work? Since his return from his summer's visit at Uncle John's country home, he had followed his resolutions made while there; to resume his friendship with his early companion. He endeavored in every way to win her back to the habits of her early childhood. At times he felt rewarded for his effort. She would seem to abandon the companions and habits which were so distasteful to

him. Once in a while she would appear restless under his restraint and would again attempt to win him over to the jolly fun of life, as she expressed it.

"Do come," she would plead, "to the dance to-morrow night. It will do us so much good to have some exercise of this kind. We are too young to coop ourselves up in this way. I shall surely die of stagnation. Really, Erny, I have been awfully good not to have smoked or rouged for a whole week, just to please you. Why not please me this time?"

Evelyn had become something of an actress the past few years; she dropped her eyes, with a most abused expression, and taking a small perfumed handkerchief from a coquettish little pocket in her red sweater drew it swiftly across her eyes, biting her lips as if to restrain a tendency to weep.

Ernest was large and strong, but as tender-hearted as a woman. He could not bear to cause her any grief, and not doubting the sincerity of her motives he drew nearer and laying his hand kindly upon hers, said in a repentant tone, "Forgive me, Evelyn, I do not intend to be selfish. I will gladly take you to the dance to-morrow evening."

She raised her eyes to his with an appealing

sweetness, and a glad cry of relief escaped her trembling lips. She sprang to her feet, danced about the room, and returned to Ernest's side. Her frame quivered with nervous excitement caused by the willing acquiescence Ernest gave to her wishes. She trilled her thanks. "I knew, Erny, you never would be so selfish and cruel. It really isn't in you to do so. Just think what a dandy time we will have! The music will be heavenly and a good crowd will be there. Eva Lockwood said that her cousin, Tom Evans, was coming. He's a bully fine fellow."

She stopped suddenly as Ernest rose from his seat and placing a hand in each pocket of his trousers, turned and walked to a near-by window, apparently more interested in the outside scenery than the subject his fair companion was enthusing over. Evelyn was bright. Observing his lack of enthusiasm she pouted her pretty lips for a moment. She started to follow him to the window but went to the piano instead and began playing very sweetly, Ernest's favorite hymn, "Softly Now the Light of Day." This diplomatic move soon brought Ernest to her side. The gloom on his manly features lifted somewhat as he joined his rich tenor with her soft soprano voice. Evelyn was endowed with a sweet voice that rang true in

every note. She instantly transformed into a being of loveliness.

The remainder of the evening she quite forgot herself. Only once did her gaze turn wistfully toward a box of cigarettes which lay on the smoking stand quite near the piano. She had evidently decided not to smoke before a man who did not indulge in this habit. Later, Evelyn relapsed into a silence which properly interpreted meant that she would prefer that Ernest should go and leave her to enjoy her cigarette and the very latest novel, entitled "His Soul Mate."

On his way home Ernest reviewed the events of the evening just spent. He did not feel quite comfortable in Evelyn's presence. She fascinated him at times, but he felt he was building only on past memories. Then again, she would disturb the true sense of his belief in womanhood. Ernest was undecided as to his life's work, and he felt that he must make his decision in that respect before asking Evelyn to become his wife, for that had been his dream for years. He had always had a longing for the ministry, and now, in later manhood, the wish to join that profession grew strongly upon him. This evening his mind was especially troubled, and before he reached his home he turned into a little pathway which led to a grove of pine trees that outlined the western

part of the village. He walked along a path, bordered on each side with mountain laurel, on through the pines and cedars.

All God's beautiful handiwork! Why should our lives be so attuned to selfish wishes that we should spend our valuable time groveling as it were in the slough of worldly pleasures? Why not seek the Master's bidding? For him to do this would mean the loss of the girl he thought he loved, for Evelyn Durand could not under present circumstances become a successful minister's wife. That would mean the renunciation of so much that was dear to him in the past, the rebuilding of his life. Had he the courage to do this?

O, that my mother was here to advise me. She would give the counsel I need and would rekindle my courage to do and to suffer as is always necessary when right and wrong are at warfare. For an hour or more Ernest wrestled with himself, and finally grasping at the only key to solve the problem, bowed in prayer. He remained thus, communing with the invisible One, who so often stretches out to all the weary and heavy laden peoples of the earth to receive and carry their burdens.

Many seem to forget this refuge until all other ways have been tried, perhaps because the invitation is so unusual, so strikingly magnanimous.

This invisible friend knows all the difficulties in the way before His help is solicited.

When his petition ceased, the assured calm came to his perturbed spirit. The burden seemed to roll away from his tightened grasp. He raised his eyes to the sky as if to acknowledge this benediction of peace. Then with uncovered head and slow step, as if to do reverence to the place, he went his way.

As he approached his home, he saw there was a light in his father's study, and noticing that the lights were out in the rest of the house he opened the door with his latch key and cautiously ascended the stairs, hesitating for a moment at the study door which was only partly open, enough for him to discover his father sitting before the fireplace, his head resting on his hand evidently in deep thought. He did not observe his son until he stood close to his side.

Raising his head and pushing back a lock of his rather long black hair, he said, "Ah, Erny, I was just thinking about you and your plans for the future. Have you come to any decision? As my old Quaker friend and preacher used to ask, 'Has the Good Spirit moved you yet?' "

There was an under-tone of eagerness in his words and a feverish look in his face as he addressed his son. Ernest did not move, and he re-

mained silent. His father had waited in prayerful expectation. Would his prayers be answered? He shifted his position from one side of the chair to the other, crossed one foot and then the other. Truly Amos was getting rather nervous at the apparent indifference of his son when such an important subject was to be discussed.

At last, he drew himself to the very edge of his deep chair, and coughing slightly in the hope of rousing Ernest to speak, he said, "My son, I am sure you recognize the seriousness of this subject, so dear to my heart, but," he added, slightly apologetic, "perhaps you had better take more time to consider. If so, we will wait a while longer."

Ernest detected the faint tinge of disappointment in his father's voice, and promptly turning away from the fire, said in a decisive tone, "Father, I need no more time to consider. My mind is made up. When I enlisted in the war it was to help save the world from the evils that come from worldly ambitions. Now I am about to enlist in a smaller army that is striving to free the world from the same powers that make for evil. I shall begin my studies at the Seminary next week. Pray for me, my father, that I may have moral strength to meet the issue."

Amos Maysfield's eyes gazed on the face of his

son. He wrestled uneasily in his large study chair, with its square back and wide arms, upholstered in dull gray leather. He wore the old-fashioned dressing gown of dull red ground and Persian pattern. His feet were encased in dressing slippers, the work of Aunt Polly. At a glance he would impress the most unfamiliar observer as a man of pious rectitude, clad if not in the saint's garb, yet garments unsoiled with the new doctrine called modernism. The son of this reverent product of the old school stood tall and firmly erect, his right hand in his trouser pocket, his left arm resting on the low mantelpiece, head bent forward and eyes fixed on the smoldering coals, which emitted small bursts of flames, the dreamy kind which carries one to the land of everywhere. Ernest Maysfield was not essentially a dreamer, but his manner now seemed to border on dreamland. His soul was silent and his lips refused to move. It seemed to him that he had suddenly been taken from the high places and dropped below, somewhere on the plains of peace still surrounded by the underbrush and other obstacles that first must be cleared away.

Amos Maysfield rose slowly from his chair, and grasping the hand of his son, said with a thrill of joy in his voice, "My son, you are truly my son, and my Father's son. My joy remains full."

Father and son were too much overcome to talk longer. Good-nights were said. The elder man felt the dawn of a realization of hopes long indulged and a newer hope which centered around Aunt Polly, while Ernest sought his room to sleep the hours away in a spirit of peaceful satisfaction.

CHAPTER XI

IT was Saturday evening when Abe Jones stood before the small mirror, which hung over a square, old-fashioned stand in the room that served as a kitchen, dining room and sitting room. With comb in one hand and brush in the other, he was using considerable energy in imparting a smooth glossy shine to his rather long and somewhat curly hair. The mirror was octagon in shape, and the stand beneath of bright cherry wood. It contained a small drawer and a shelf below. This piece of furniture was sacred to Abe's needs; the drawer for his comb and brush and the shelf for his magazines. His wife stood before the sink in the small ell that joined the kitchen. It contained the cooking stove, a small wooden sink with cupboards beneath, and a cupboard with wooden doors for tins and cooking dishes. This room still held the old-fashioned name of sink-room. Adjoining it was a covered porch used in the summer for the weekly wash, and in the winter as a woodhouse.

Maria Jane had been noticing these unusual efforts of her husband in "slicking up," as he called it. Not that he did not every day comb his hair at this same little stilted mirror, but there

was something different in his attitude of displayed satisfaction. He was anticipating something; his mind was made up; he was going somewhere. A feeling of suspicion crept over his wife. She closed her lips tightly and with unabated energy scrubbed the white board which grooved and sloping served as a drainer for dishes. She rinsed her brush and hung up her scrub-cloth on the inside of the sink doors. She washed her hands and wiped them on the corner of her colored gingham apron. She opened and closed the door of the cupboard. She moved a chair, not too softly, rattled the stove handle, and drew down the green shade. Maria was doing her best to overcome her curiosity. She advanced toward the kitchen, not changing her mind, but really to make one more effort to resist the temptation to lecture her husband. She went to the pump to the right of the sink and filled a yellow wooden pail with water, which came down from a cement cistern beneath the floor. She then began picking up the articles which were already in their proper places, for Maria Jane was a graduate of a school of experience and had come forth a splendid housekeeper. To be sure her nerves had suffered because of her desire to acquire perfection in small details. Besides the lack of proper equipment there was constant

dampening of her ardor by the easy going, or as she frankly named it, the shiftlessness of her husband; a trait of character which is not easy to change after twenty-one years of application. Maria sat down in a small cushioned rocker humming slowly, hoping to attract Abe's attention, but Abe gleefully whistled. This act roused his wife sufficiently to speak, in spite of her well-meant resolve to make him speak first. More than all else he had taken a fresh collar from the table. This was grounds for suspicion, and Maria started the conversation by saying in a semi-pleasant voice, "Where are you going, Abe Jones?"

No answer. Abe continued his amateur imitation of the meadow lark.

"Why are you putting on a clean celluloid collar and your best striped silk bow that I bought you at the Five and Ten Cent Store a year ago this very month? You really ought to keep it for best."

In the many one-sided conversations between Maria Jane and her husband she seldom ever melted enough to show the pathos in her emotions, but now her tone changed and the almost nervous quiver in her voice attracted Abe as the usual torrent of invectives would not do. "Perhaps, after all," he mentally evolved, "Maria is tired

of waging small battles because they can never be won until we conquer armies.'' Abe ceased to whistle and magnanimously turned to look at his wife from an entirely new standpoint. ''O, yes, Maria, I'm fixing up a little. I am going to make a call.'' He hesitated for a moment in the last endeavor to slip the elastic of the silk bow over the collar button. In so doing a side glance in the mirror showed Maria Jane using a handkerchief suspiciously near her eyes. Abe was warm-hearted. He relented at once, cursing himself for his obstinacy. ''You see, Maria, I thought you would lecture me so as to have me stay at home and I meant to tease you a little so as to have some part in the play, even though it was only a starter. This collar is not a new one. I wore it to the fair this year and, by Jiminy, I wore it a year ago.''

Maria remained silent. Abe continued to answer her questions as they had been presented. ''The bow tie is very swell, Maria, I prize it highly and would not wear it to-night only that I am going over to Mr. John Maysfield's. I want to ask him about the taxes.''

This information worked like a charm. Maria was all interest. The name of John Maysfield was the password to her ambitions. Poor, stupid Abe, had you honestly spoken at first the forego-

ing argument in this domestic scene would have been averted.

"I'm mighty glad you are going Abe. It's worth your while to associate with men like that. Mr. Maysfield is a splendid man, none finer. They say he is always nice in his home; that he never tells his wife that her pies are not as good as his mother's were. Of course, she was a school teacher and had it all to learn just as I did, for I was a milliner. They say he is sweet and nice at home, and does not save all his bright sayings for the country store or as school visitor or for the town meetings or even for prayer meeting." Maria paused, somewhat breathless.

Abe dryly responded, "I dare say. Good-bye, Maria, I'll be back early. You won't mind sitting up 'till eight o'clock, will you?"

Uncle John brought in the mail from the street box. It had been delivered by the rural postman. Aunt Leddy looked up from the stocking she was double heeling with eager glance at the pile of letters and papers that her husband laid on the center table. Aunt Leddy tried to be patient, as he slowly fumbled over the postmarks and laid each piece down without apparent interest.

"Anything worth while?" asked his wife.

"No, no," drawled John, "mostly agricultural letters, advertisements and so on."

The very last of the pile he scrutinized very closely, holding it up to get a better light and suddenly exclaimed, "By George, here's one that we are interested in. It's from Erny. Could always tell his plain writing. Some letters we might as well not get at all as we have to wait until the writer comes to read them to us. Kind of embarrassing, isn't it, Leddy?"

Aunt Leddy's face was the symbol of happy anticipation. She dropped her work, leaned back in her chair, complacently folded her hands and listened as her husband read,—

Dear Uncle John:

You must consider me very neglectful in not writing you before this late date. However, I am sure there has been justifiable excuse, and know that you will consider it sufficient to release me from any unkind thoughts you may have entertained. For some weeks, I have been seriously considering what kind of work I ought to take up. It is high time that I was doing something to start my future work.

Uncle, if I loaf any longer I shall be ashamed to look my manhood in the face. Counting business ventures, I can safely say that my financial taste and corresponding ability is far below par, and as for professions, you know, there has been

only one chosen for many years, that of the ministry. I have felt it was in the air; I breathed that from boyhood. My good father and best of mothers had entertained that wish for me; their only son. I have hesitated for many reasons, but I do think that did more to help me decide than any other thing. The climax was reached last evening and I could not wait longer to inform you. I received my father's blessing and feel equally sure of yours.

Your affectionate nephew,

ERNEST.

P. S.—I hope that my theological course will not prevent you from engaging me for the summer vacation as your hired man. Nothing can take the place of those hot days in the hayfields, with an afternoon's rest under the maple tree, or when half weary, that roam over the hillside pastures for the cows at dusk, with visions of Aunt Leddy's apple and berry pies before one. Yes, Uncle, I shall need all this to build up the physical man, thereby strengthening the spiritual nature. Lastly, I shall not wish to spend my whole time in reaching out and reclaiming the lost sheep, but would like to be a while with the good sheep that have become tireless shepherds walking the slopes of Maple Farm.

Awaiting the approving benediction of my second father, with love to Aunt Leddy.

I am,

Faithfully yours,

ERNEST MAYSFIELD.

John Maysfield dropped his nephew's letter on the table, drew his chair close to his wife, and after a deep breath remarked cheerfully, "There's the right stuff in that fellow. He will surely make his mark." He paused, then added in a more demonstrative tone, "By George, I'm a wee bit surprised that a man of Erny's ability and experience is satisfied to begin life with next to nothing and to look forward to a steady diet of that kind. Amos you know has had to live a hand-to-mouth existence, and the Lord only knows whether Erny will ever get any more than the monthly allowance grudgingly given by a small parish. Of course, if he should be called to one of those city pulpits where they can afford to pay an equal salary for the choir and the preacher, well, then, Erny might be able to afford a Ford." With a loving reminder, John rose from his chair, the light of a happy soul shone forth, and as his eye fell on Leddy, she remarked, "Spiritual food is without money and without price."

John loitered a minute at the dining room door

which opened from the cheerful sitting room and nodded his head in acquiescence with his wife's high-minded solution of the problem. He walked on to the kitchen, then almost immediately turned and reëntered the sitting room. The circumstance curiously reminded Leddy of a certain concert singer who after each number trotted behind the curtain, knowing she would return in a few moments.

"I guess I better begin to look over them books Mrs. Norton left here for the new library. She said that I could just skim them over, but even with a skimmer it looks to me like some job."

John was barely seated at his old-fashioned secretary with its glass doors of many-sized panes, inside of which hung dark green baize curtains, when a timid knock was heard, followed quickly by another of the same register.

"What's that?" exclaimed Uncle John as he rose to his feet just in the act of adjusting his reading spectacles. Opening the outer door, he saw no one, and as the knock was repeated he listened, and said, "By George, it must be at the old entry door."

He hurriedly made his way towards a small porch. It finished a long flight of back stairs, a kind of landing spot, between two doors. It was hardly ever used, hence, Uncle John was curious

to know who his caller might be. Turning on a small electric light he threw open the door. Leddy started to follow him in eager curiosity, but stood still when she heard his hospitable greeting.

"Why, Abe Jones! How are you, Abe? Glad to see you. Come right in. What made you come around to this door?"

Meanwhile Abe removed his automobile cap. He wore one he said to advertise his business, not because it was becoming. John half pulled him along to the sitting room.

"Leddy, this is our neighbor, Mr. Abe Jones."

Leddy extended her hand with her usual cordiality, saying, "But you are really not a very neighborly neighbor after all, are you, Mr. Jones?" with a rather playful inflexion on the last words.

"I must admit that I am not a very good neighbor in the sense you mean," replied Abe.

"But there's always room for improvement," interrupted Uncle John. "If the house was on fire you would be here in no time. I'll bet on that. Have a chair Abe. How's your family, your wife I mean?"

"Wal, Maria Jane is pretty well. But as usual she keeps most busy, she says, but I can't see how there can be much to do with only two of us."

"It would seem so to me," said Uncle John,

"but then you know woman's work is never done."

Uncle John always tried to help out. His wife glanced her loving approval but said nothing. His assertion she considered sufficient. John pointed his right forefinger toward the pile of books on the floor near the secretary saying, "You must think I do nothing but read books."

"Yes, I was just thinking that I would like a few of them myself," said Abe. "You see, Mr. Maysfield, I like to read; take to it like a duck takes to water. Now Maria Jane does not approve of it; calls it a waste of precious time. She confines her reading to the *Christian Herald* and books like Uncle Tom's Cabin, books she says that have accomplished something in the world. She don't care to spend her time pouring over the general cussedness of the peoples. I don't mean that Maria uses just that language. No, Maria is much too polite; she calls it the wickedness of mankind. Books are full of it."

"Yes," interrupted John, "there seems to be a kind of, to put it mildly, a dare devil spirit among the present authors. Perhaps they find it profitable; books do sell pretty well nowadays. People will pay to read things out of the ordinary."

"Yes," asserted Abe, "that's just what I tell Maria Jane, that I agree with one of the old poets,

'Man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long.' I like something that will interest me. You see, Mr. Maysfield, Maria Jane takes the *Christian Herald* and reads it over and over until it gets on her brain so that I don't have to read it. She tells me all about it. She pays two dollars and fifty cents a year for it, and I subscribe for the weekly newspaper, but neither quite satisfies me, so I borrow the *Saturday Evening Post* from my neighbor, Deacon Stebbins. He took it from a boy that wanted to go to college, and he says he keeps on subscribing for it. It looks kind of natural to see it lying on the table. Children that come in like to look at the pictures, and the hired girl is crazy to get it when it first comes. Our plan has been to exchange our *Christian Herald* for his *Saturday Evening Post.* I go to make the exchange one week and he the next, but it's got to the pass that I have to do it every week. He don't seem to be in so much of a hurry to get my *Herald* as I am to get his *Post.* The other night I told Maria Jane I'd just step over and see if it had come, and through the sitting room window I could see the Deacon. He sat before the fire in his green dressing gown and carpet slippers and was reading the *Post.* I went in rather cautiously on purpose. He turned quickly and dropped his magazine in his hurry.

I said, "Good evening, Deacon, have you finished reading the *Saturday Evening Post?*"

He hemmed and hawed for a minute, then recovering his official dignity, said, "Yes, Abe, I was just looking over the advertisements. We have got to have a new kitchen stove. I'll visit with you now and send the paper over tomorrow."

Uncle John, who had been listening very attentively to this narrative, said, "It won't hurt the deacon a bit to entertain himself with a little modern fiction. When you see him, recommend a new book that has a wide circulation, called 'Weston.' It's fine—a real masterpiece. Have you ever heard about it?"

"No, I haven't," replied Abe. "Tell me what's it all about?"

"Well, mostly concerns the people that live in Weston, a small town. It's a most wonderful description of the town, the scenery, and the people. The heroine, who went there from the east, was a very bright, pretty woman, possessed of many gifts and graces, but to my mind she lacked one important gift." Uncle John paused and in an apologetic tone said, "Of course, you cannot find in any one person everything desirable. Well, I was going to say she was seriously lacking in one thing, and that was common

sense. Was it Lincoln that said, and he turned to his wife, 'that common sense is greater than genius'? One accustomed to a sensible wife gets awfully tired of this young reformer before the story ends.

"No, Abe, I guess I wouldn't recommend it to Deacon Stebbins unless he's sure his lease of life will be extended."

Uncle John bent over, and taking a book from the pile said, "Perhaps you know that Miss Norton, our public spirited townswoman is starting a library. One corner of the east gallery of the Congregational Church is to be used for the present. Why in thunder!" Aunt Polly looked up from her knitting and Uncle John modified his remark, "Why in the world they selected me to look over this pile of books to see if they were proper ones for youths of our town to read, I can't see."

Abe, greatly interested, said, "The other day a lady, I should say middle aged woman, drove up to my place of business with a flat tire. She sat reading while I put on the tire. I finally made bold to ask her what she was reading. It was a natural question, for when a boy I was early orphaned and lived in a large family where there was a fine library. Old Mr. Beadle used to say, 'Take all the books you can read. Cultivate a

taste for reading.' I certainly did take advantage of his offer, and I don't mind telling you in confidence, Mr. Maysfield, that if I had not met Maria Jane so early in life and married so soon, perhaps I'd been in better business. The trade of my father and grandfather was a blacksmith." Abe hesitated, scratched his head, and added, "I guess it's in the blood what profession we lean toward. Well, to make a long story short, this woman said that she was chosen to read over some books that the Colonial Dames were sending to a small town for a circulating library. This book she said was called, 'Mr. Gibbons.' It's widely read and by a famous author, but she said, 'From what I've seen of it I shall not put it in for young people to read. It's all right for mature minds that have strong principles.' "

"I must say," continued Abe, "that I was all curiosity. Is it about Mr. Gibbons that wrote the History of Rome?"

"It's about a man who preferred darkness to light. At least it is safe to say that he followed a course that never brings happiness to anyone. The moral of this book may do great good, but I believe only mature minds can reason it out. Youth needs no plodding by suggestions of evil doing."

"No," she said, "It's better to hold up higher ideals to them."

"Thank you, Abe, for telling me of this lady's criticism. It will save me time on these books. I glanced at a book last evening. It was a discussion on the subject of personal liberty. I call it Tommy Rot," said John. "For as near as I can make out the modern definition of personal liberty is everlasting cutting up; getting drunk and making a fool of oneself. The name ought to be changed to personal deviltry, for that is just what it means and what it leads to." Uncle John brought his fist down with emphasis on the arm of his chair. Aunt Leddy did not move, showing that she was in harmony with Uncle John's statement.

The striking of eight solemn strokes from the tall clock startled Abner, and he rose hastily to his feet, his cap dropping from its perch on his knee, where it had remained during his interview. He had promised his wife that he would return at eight o'clock, and Maria Jane was very punctilious regarding early hours.

"I came over especially to inquire about the taxes. Do you think they will be any higher this fall?"

This was one of the few subjects that Uncle John could not crowd out from the field of real-

ism. "You bet they will," he lustily responded, "just as long as Job Self Intyre directs the politics of this town we shall have high taxes. Job rules the roost, and will be sure to feather his own nest regardless of anyone else. Confound the man!" was Uncle John's harmless expletive.

Abner stooped, picked up his cap and fingered it a little nervously. His face brightened as he said, "Don't you suppose, Mr. Maysfield, that we can get all the women to come out at the fall election and vote him out of office?"

A somewhat dubious look crossed the face of Uncle John before he replied, "You see, Abner, the difficulty lies right here. You never can be quite certain what the women will really decide to do. They are not, as you might say, dependable in politics." Each word of this last assertion was accompanied by a downward drop of a finger on the arm of his chair. Also a summary glance toward the door through which Aunt Leddy had so recently vanished.

Uncle John bore no malice toward anyone, and his questionable compliment for the women brought forth a speedy explanatory remark, "If Job puts on his diplomatic hat and calls on the women, telling the mothers that their babies are the prettiest and the spinsters that they are look-

ing younger and more blooming than ever, you see, Abe, how the tide would turn.''

''I do see,'' answered Abe, and bidding Mr. Maysfield good-night, he went out into the cool air of the evening, endeavoring meanwhile to lull the apprehensive fear that the lateness of the hour would result in a familiar domestic scene.

CHAPTER XII

THE day after his talk with his father Ernest felt very much better. The question of greatest importance had been decided. The sentence for life work had been pronounced. His course was definite and certain. An object worth working for would be attained. Furthermore, this course had been chosen for him by his parents, almost at his birth. This knowledge had been more or less in his vision, all the way along. Sometimes to be sure, it was merely a subconscious glimpse of something that might take place in the future. All doubts, the petty selfishness or worldly ambitions that had served as a drag to his better spirit had lurked with unceasing vigilance in his growing years, and it seemed unlikely that he would ever have sufficient courage to smother and obliterate their suggestions. Now as the clouds that had obscured his vision had rolled away, he could see clearly that for years he had been haunted with the fear of what this decision would curtail.

To-day he stood, as it were, on the pinnacle of the mountain, and could say in a manly spirit of triumph, "Get thee behind me, the thoughts that

have trammeled and tightened their grasp on the flesh pots of Egypt."

Yesterday he was emancipated, and now he could sing as they did during the war, "Onward, Christian Soldiers." Yet there must be a true ring in the notes to have them enlist people in the army of the Lord.

While dwelling upon the thoughts closely connected with his decision made the day before, it suddenly occurred to him that this evening he had promised to take Evelyn Durand to a dance. This promise was made with all sincerity and must be kept. It seemed to contrast less harmoniously with his late actions than he could have desired. However, Ernest did not look upon dancing as a sinful pleasure; he was not fond of this kind of pleasure for himself and thus sought to be careful in disapproving it for others. Most everything if treated rightly could be made a clean pastime.

He said with a firm voice, "I shall never do it myself when I take up my profession, but I shall not frown upon it for others."

Promptly at eight o'clock Ernest stood at the door of the Durand's. Evelyn came bounding forward, her face beaming. She had omitted the rouge, but her cheeks showed little the pallor which a constant user of cosmetic is sure to have. The unusual excitement of taking Ernest to a

dance brought a corresponding tinge of pink to her cheeks.

"How nice you look, Erny. I haven't seen you in a dress suit for such a long time. Eva Lockwood declared that 'her Cousin, Tom Evans, would be the best looking fellow there,' but I'm sure she will have to guess again."

With a smile she awaited his reply, but somehow her attempt at well meant praise, uttered in a loud chirping voice, irritated rather than pleased Ernest. He could not dissimulate, and Evelyn knew something was wrong. She tossed her head, with more or less of a defiant gesture, causing the bobbed and much frizzled hair to shake from one side to the other.

"Perhaps, Erny, if you are not stuck on yourself you will say you like my dress." She fluttered about him like a canary bird.

The dress of thin chiffon of orange hue clung to the slender figure. Narrow black velvet straps held the sleeveless waist in place. The skirt came just below her knees and her limbs were partly covered with yellow silk socks. Her high heeled slippers of gold color encased small tapering feet. Ernest could hardly conceal his surprise. From glimpses of fashionably dressed women in magazines, he had a vague idea that the dress was in the extreme. 'Would my mother

have worn anything so immodest, and would Aunt Polly, or even my sister Mildred? Or would Elizabeth Harding dress like that for public gaze?" Heaven forbid, he thought.

He noticed that a slight frown was gathering on Evelyn's brow. He brought himself back feeling rude and impolite. "O yes, Evelyn, your dress is," he touched the soft chiffon, "a pretty color, isn't it?"

The girl's face relaxed into the semblance of a smile as she coquettishly asked, "Don't you think it is becoming?"

She challenged him with her look, but Ernest's mind again relapsed into serious thought. Evelyn stepped to a near-by table and plucking a pink carnation prepared to place it in the lapel of his coat. "Now, will you be good?" she said, and flashed a look of injured innocence into his calm gray eyes. Her presence so close to him roused some of the old-time thrills. He reached for the hand that held the flower, saying, "Thank you, Evelyn. Forgive my seeming indifference. I have been dwelling upon a very serious and important subject." His glance was kindly, but she held aloof, startled by the word serious.

She said, gloomily, "Erny, you can always spring something of that kind. If it is serious, I know that it has nothing to do with me. Come on,

old prudy man, let's get off. I promised Eva Lockwood and Tom we would be there by nine o'clock. Surely they will take the blues out of you."

Ernest assisted her with her sporty evening wrap, saying little but thinking deeply.

The small town of Parkington was situated half-way between two comparatively large cities, each with about the same population. Glenford, the smaller of the two, was more frequented by the pleasure seekers of Parkington.

Evelyn Durand had met Eva Lockwood at some of the social functions at her home, and at the club. Eva belonged to the class of girls who early entered the social whirl, and failing to make an early marriage, later had a formal coming out party. Her name was often seen in the paper, and Mrs. Durand was much pleased that her daughter should attract Eva and her friends. A new feature in Glenford was a dancing house called La Belle Maison, and it was supposedly run by so-called leaders of society, who are ever seeking something new. Life must be varied to be spicy, and many of the sons and daughters of the conservative class frequented this dance hall relying on the veracity of this phrase, "O the music is so fine." A café was connected with the

hall and to-night as Ernest and Evelyn entered the refreshment tables were well filled.

"There they are!" announced Evelyn. "Let's join them." Everyone looked up as the two advanced toward the table in the further corner. Evelyn was not an unusual figure at this place, but the tall manly person at her side caused even the waiters to take special notice. Ernest was introduced to Eva and Tom. The latter sprang to his feet and bowing to Ernest, he grasped Evelyn's hand as he said in a rather familiar voice, "By jove, Evelyn, you're a peach if there ever was one," then lowering his voice, "May I have the first dance and as many more as you can give me?"

"Certainly, Tom," assented Evelyn.

Miss Lockwood cast several self-conscious glances at Ernest. She knew from Evelyn's description of him that he was not exactly one of their kind, hence, she must move slowly in order to gain a foothold. His manner indicated a reserve which might not be easily set aside. Eva was known to have said that she could bring any man to her feet if she wanted to. She would first try dignity, but quiet men, she thought, often liked their opposite. A quiet man likes a talkative woman and vice versa. A proud unbending nature might enjoy a little slang like whipped

cream on a hard crusted pie. She had promised her Cousin Tom she would do her corking best to keep Ernest away from Evelyn. She began her onslaught by informing him that the evening was beautiful—most too fine to stay indoors and dance. Ernest assented but without enthusiasm. She looked sedately at the hard crusted roll she was crumbling with the fingers of her left hand. Her second attempt aroused a faint bit of interest when she asked if he took part in the recent parade of the American Legion.

"Yes," he said, "it was a small part I had in that long line of marchers."

Eva saw an opportunity, a loophole to flatter the young man's vanity. "But, I'm sure, Mr. Maysfield, there could be no more perfect soldier than yourself," and with a slight turn of the head she raised the goblet of water to her lips as if to drink to his health.

"By the way," croaked Tom Evans, "I have a bottle of the best claret with me; shall we sip it now or later?"

"Now, now," emphasized the girls. "My throat is awfully dry," said Eva, "and this water is never good. Besides the suppers are really bum."

"Well, to be sure," came from Tom, "I patronize the supper table only to keep the place going."

The bottle of wine was produced and Tom, like

all drinkers inclined to hospitality, filled the glasses to overflowing. Ernest turned down his tumbler much to the surprise of Tom.

"Have some, Maysfield; it's first quality and you need not fear to be hauled up. One has a right to serve his own wine."

"Thank you, Tom, but you must excuse me. I never take it," replied Ernest.

Evelyn sipped hers with apparent relish. Once she turned to Ernest saying, "Don't be a prude, Erny. Everybody drinks wine, even the ministers."

"Not all of them," coolly remarked Ernest.

"I don't believe it," shouted Tom. "They will all take it on the sly if only from the standpoint that it's for the stomach's sake." This remark, with the subsequent grin, brought perceptible titters from the girls. Ernest ignored Tom's assertion, knowing it was not a suitable place to argue the subject. He remained silent, but wore a troubled look as Evelyn allowed Tom to refill her glass.

She was partially aware of this fact, but it did not deter her from saying, coquettishly, as she lifted her glass, "Let's drink to the health of Mr. Ernest Maysfield."

Eva added, "May he enjoy the dance more than the supper."

Ernest bowed politely as he took Evelyn's coat from the back of the chair. She whispered in Tom's ear as he bent over to pick up her glove that had fallen beneath the table. "I must dance the first with Ernest for he brought me," adding, "you may cut in every time you please."

The first dance was the grape vine, with decent, graceful motions. Ernest was applauded by Evelyn, who said, "Don't hesitate, Erny, to ask any girl here. It's not a conventional place and you know it's an advantage to dance with a good many. Don't hold the girls so far away. It looks as if you were afraid of them. The girls always laugh at the bashful men."

Evelyn laughed as she started to jazz with Tom Evans. Ernest sought out Miss Lockwood and attempted the second dance with her. As the evening advanced Evelyn seemed mirthful and very happy. Wilder grew their effort for happiness, louder the jesting. Several groups of seemingly more sane persons were preparing to leave as if tired of the place. Evelyn whirling past ventured to inquire of Erny why he was not dancing.

"My head is tired," was the prompt reply. Later he asked her if she was ready to go.

"Not yet, Erny; I cannot resist this heavenly music," and away she stepped doing the turkey trot. Ernest stood near the entrance. The air

that floated in sweet with autumnal fragrance seemed to lure him out. The sky was clear studded with stars; a half-moon cast its white beams over all.

The La Belle Maison was situated on a hill commanding a fine view of the city. The terraced lawn leading to the hall was smooth with verdant grass and the surrounding grounds were attractively laid out with green shrubs and well kept paths. Here and there a rustic seat or two, might be seen in an embowered shade. Ernest wandered aimlessly about. He saw as never before that many of his dreams were fast fading from his grasp. But what did it matter? Had he not chosen the better part? The soft cool air soothed him like his mother's voice in childhood. He paced the open pathways, his hands clasped behind him. Occasionally he passed couples seated in retiring places. He could not help but entertain a kind of pity for those whose cups were filled with the froth and foam of emptiness. He earnestly hoped it was not the "I am better than thou" pity. Retracing his steps he caught a glimpse of a dress of orange color. A couple turned into a sheltered nook. He recognized the merry laugh of Evelyn and, not wishing to walk directly in front of them, stepped back, the thick shrubbery hiding him from view. He did not care

to listen to the conversation but a kind of brotherly instinct led him to remain where he was. He tried not to hear at first, but his name being mentioned he grew interested.

"That prig that you have with you to-night, I can't make out." It was the husky voice of Tom Evans. "I don't see how you stand such a guy."

"Stop, Tom, don't talk that way," retorted Evelyn as she inhaled the smoke of her cigarette. "Erny is a nice fellow. I've known him a long time. He does not show up well to-night. You see he was in the service and really doesn't know how to dance."

"Well, I suppose he is a good sort of a chap after all," answered Tom, "but he's not just the kind of sport to go around with our crowd."

"No," sighed Evelyn, "it is useless to try to convert him. He always was too old for his years."

"Yes," echoed Tom, "quite too old for his years. Don't ask him to our next party. Cut it out."

Tom gave her another cigarette. She still seemed to evince a loyal spirit to Ernest. She said, "Tom, don't you dare to say anything derogatory to Erny. We are, indeed the best of friends. I sometimes think that he is better than the rest of us."

Tom deeming it best to drop the subject and turn Evelyn's attention on other things passed her some flattering remarks regarding her beautiful dress. He then presented a plan for an automobile ride to South Glenford to take in the movies and returning to stop at the popular roadhouse for a late supper. "We can get some claret there better than I bought to-night. It makes my mouth water to even think of it."

"Who is going?" inquired Evelyn, briskly. "Mother won't let me go unless it's the right crowd."

"To be sure," answered Tom. "It will be Eva and my friends, a picked crowd. One of the boys at our place has a seven passenger car and he's a mighty good driver."

"When can we go?" asked Evelyn.

"Eva will let you know what night. Her father and mother are going to New York in a few days. She will ask you to visit her and then it can be arranged," replied Tom.

"It will be fun," rejoined Evelyn. "Have you any more cigarettes?"

"No, this is the last one," and Tom showed her the empty case.

"Never mind. Mother says I'm smoking too much. Let's go back for another dance. I'm

afraid Ernest will be looking for me," said Evelyn.

"You're a brick, Evelyn; I always have a bully time wherever you are," returned Tom.

They started back and Erny could see that Tom's arm was supporting her as they slowly entered the hall. Ernest followed slowly and the flashing gleam from his eyes and the determined movement of his strong manly frame foreboded something more than idle fancy. Ice cream was suggested and a plea for one more dance. But Ernest Maysfield was master of the situation. He was in earnest when he said, "It's nearly one o'clock." To be sure, Evelyn was peeved and showed it, but Ernest was firm and the weary, leering glance that Tom Evans shot after them fell unnoticed by both.

"I'll get the best of him," he sneered as he sought his Cousin Eva.

CHAPTER XIII

JAMES STERLING sat at his desk at the end of a very busy day. He slowly arranged papers and assorted letters. Then with a final picking up of loose writing paper, pens, and pencils, he closed the silver lid of his large glass inkwell as the finale to the day's work. As he lazily leaned back in his office chair, he was a picture of rest and contentment. The two months spent abroad and largely in the society of Miss Martha Gale and her charming niece had proved most satisfactory. Although he had not won his heart's desire, yet, he was not discouraged, but very hopeful. The days and years that had overlapped each other with success stood like sentinels to guard the untried fields yet to be conquered. "All things come to them that wait." James' dreams of conquest were not momentary flights of imagination. He knew full well that his past successes had been acquired by slow paces of patient endeavor. There were times during the happy days spent so familiarly with the object of his desire, that he could hardly refrain from asking Elizabeth Harding to become his wife, but his usual caution, that sickened not at hope deferred, restrained that impulse that drives most men

under similar conditions. He would wait until he could see something more than polite and friendly interest in her manner toward him. He would exert every influence that was in his power to this effect. During the trip he endeavored to call forth that feeling of dependence which made it possible for him to be their constant companion. "When the temperature is favorable," he thought, "I shall know it." There had been opportune moments during the hours they spent together in pleasant sight-seeing. James Sterling was evidently in favor with Miss Martha who considered his presence a forerunner of good fortune and happiness.

She looked on with approval and in many ways opened the way for these two to play the turtle-dove scene. She would remain in the hotel with the plea of tired eyes or the excuse to write letters or to read a new book.

Elizabeth belonged to a certain type of female who is endowed with a conscience in the matters of love as well as duty. She had none of the aimless flirt or coquette in her nature. She was natural and beautiful, not cold and irresponsive, but above all she had a dignified manner toward those who were very near the border land of making love to her. You could not get very near at a moment's notice. James Sterling was willing to

wait, and this evening, with the soft light of a setting sun floating in ribbons of gold around his desk he was busily thinking, weaving the past, present, and future into a piece of rarest tapestry. The background was a home with trees and beautiful flowers where there were children at play. All this vision he saw in the sparkling brown eyes of Elizabeth Harding.

James had returned home alone on an earlier boat as Miss Gale and her niece were to visit with friends in England. "In two weeks," he thought, "they will be here and then, perhaps, Elizabeth will be glad to see me." He smiled as his gaze wandered on the green leaves floating calmly on the quiet evening breeze. James felt clean and ready. There had been no dark place in his life, either to explain or to cover up. He merited the reputation of being a good, large-hearted gentleman. He had nothing to fear, and the thoughts uppermost in his mind were: "Will she have missed me? Will she be glad to see me?"

He rose from his chair and locked his desk. He leaned against the window and with his other arm he gave a swinging movement which might be called a caress for the beautiful scene before him. The rich sun setting slowly was succeeded by purple mist and the afterglow formed a halo over the scene he loved, so dear, so beautiful, all

summed up in one word, home. The poetry and romance pent up but not entirely obscured by business activities came to the front now, and James Sterling realized that the world was beautiful.

Taking his hat from the small coat room he said, "I need some exercise and will walk over to Miss Gale's and inquire if Jenkins has heard just when they are expected home. I might run down to New York and surprise them."

This thought seemed to gain favor with him and by the time he had reached the rise of ground over which the carefully raked driveway curved so correctly, he had decided to meet them in New York. Jenkins had just climbed the back steps carrying a pail of milk.

At the same time Esmerelda rushed into the kitchen from the front of the house. "My, Mr. Jenkins," she gasped breathlessly, "a man is coming up the driveway and Lordy me, it looks as if it might be Mr. Sterling. The bank president, you know. Miss Martha has heaps of respect for him."

"Well, what of it?" snorted Jenkins as he put the pail on the table, took off his faded straw hat and deliberately walked to the sink to wash his hands.

"But don't you see, Mr. Jenkins, that I can't

go to the door, not being dressed up?" Esmerelda was in her Sunday best, a red and yellow plaid skirt with a bright green waist. The bell rang. "Go to the door, you fool," shouted Jenkins.

"But I am not dressed for it. Miss Martha wouldn't like it. She's awfully particular," Esmerelda said hurriedly.

"Don't stand there like a this year's calf. Put on your apron and go," said Jenkins.

Esmerelda stood in some awe of Mr. Jenkins, especially when he was dressed to drive Old Dobbin for Miss Martha. She dared not overrule his authority. She grasped a discarded apron and answered the second ring of the bell.

"If Mr. Sterling wants to see me," added Jenkins, "tell him I'll be there shortly."

Mr. Jenkins understood his position too well to receive callers in the front parlor. He went hastily into the garden as if to perform some belated work and met Mr. Sterling at the entrance to the vegetable garden. Both men removed their hats simultaneously.

"Good evening, Mr. Jenkins, fine evening this. I was out for a little exercise and thought I'd come this way. When do you expect the ladies home?" inquired Mr. Sterling.

Mr. Sterling never lost time in making known

his errands. Directness of speech belonged to him.

"Yes, sir," replied Jenkins, "I had a letter this morning saying that they expected to reach New York on Friday next and would be home on the following Wednesday." Jenkins delivered this information with his eyes resting on the tomato plants by his side. He looked up under his shaggy gray eyebrows as he said, "It's mighty lonely to have Miss Martha away so long. She's a fine woman, Miss Martha is. I've lived with her nigh forty years now." He gave a solemn shake of his head, then with a slow brightened expression, "Miss Lizabeth's a fine young woman, jest like her Aunt."

"You are right, Mr. Jenkins, you are right." Then as if to modify the interest he might have shown he turned the conversation to things more personal to the old gardener. "How's your garden this year? Everything looks productive."

"Yes, sir," assented Jenkins. "We have had a good deal of dry weather. My corn did not fill out well, but the beans and other vegetables are about the same. Sorry about the corn as Miss Martha likes succotash. Peppers are good. Got some fine cauliflower over there." Jenkins pointed to a small plot of cabbage and cauliflower

and, farther over, to trenches full of green celery tips.

"It's a great study," said Mr. Sterling. "You have certainly made a success of it. If we do our work well, be it indoors or out, we have not lived in vain."

Silence prevailed for a moment.

Mr. Sterling asked, "How's your rheumatism this fall? Miss Gale has often said that you were troubled with it."

"Wal," replied Jenkins in an uncertain way, "I guess I shall always be bothered with that." Then with a rising accent in his tone, "The doctors don't seem to get any further with it than Omega Oil. Strange it baffles them all; the smartest of them when you pin him right down to explain the cause, falls back on heredity. I'm sure, Mr. Sterling, that is not so. My father's father died before he was old enough to get rheumatism and my mother was as far from the cussed ailment as our old Major is from fleas. There's some other reason not yet discovered." Jenkins drew a long breath. "I hope, Mr. Sterling, you will never have to contend with a disease that is to be governed by the weather. It's sickly to think of it."

"I'm sorry for you and any one else thus afflicted," said Mr. Sterling, "but I must be turning

toward home. Your supper, too, must be waiting for you. Thank you for the information regarding Miss Gale's return."

James Sterling lifted his hat and with a pleasant, "Good evening," left Jenkins, who stood staring for several minutes at the manly figure of Mr. Sterling. Then turning toward the house he muttered, "By gosh, he's a real man. Lizabeth Harding will get a first-class man if she marries him." Jenkins finished his statement with a prolonged whistle.

CHAPTER XIV

MISS MARTHA GALE and her niece were in their private apartment at the Holland House. Miss Gale, following in the footsteps of her father, had for many years made her home at the Fifth Avenue hotel, but when that esteemed hotel gave way to business she selected the Holland House as one of the finest places for visitors to the Metropolis. Mr. Gale had business interests in New York which led them there instead of to Boston. That city was not entirely left out, for like all dwellers within the precinct of the Bay State they reserved a tender place in their esteem for Boston.

The Aquitania had been on time and when they had been released from the espionage of the Custom House, they were driven in a taxi directly to their hotel. They were greeted with special attention by the man in livery tending the door, the facetious man at the elevator, the head waiter, bell boys, parlor and chamber maids. Miss Gale had an established reputation for liberal feeing, in part for the deference shown her, as well as for the service.

The same suite of rooms on the second floor overlooking the court was placed at her service.

Miss Gale's unwillingness to go higher was also an established fact and the smiling clerk handed the key to the boy with an air of certainty. "Show Miss Gale 24 and 26."

Miss Martha removed her hat and carefully placed it on the closet shelf. Then turning to her niece with satisfaction in every word, said, "Oh, my Elizabeth, it is good to be here again. One of our homes in our dear native land. Of all the peoples of this earth are not we the most fortunate? The privilege of living in such a country as ours!" Here Miss Gale stepped to the bureau and opening one of the small upper drawers, placed therein her neatly folded gloves and her knotted face veil. Then, after a careful survey of herself in the mirror, she launched forth in words of thankfulness that they had been brought back safely.

"Elizabeth, dear, will you release that hook that is tearing my hair net?"

After some struggle herself with the aggressive hook that served to fasten a small black silk mantle around her shoulders, she stood meekly before her niece who disentangled the caught hook.

"Thank you, dear," Miss Martha breathed the usual sigh of relief over the vanquished hook. "I do believe that I may try some of those new snaps they talk about. It really might be a saving of

material as well as one's temper." Miss Martha had good control of that part of her nature. Still she said, "Little things seem to irritate more than big ones." She walked about the room feeling of the bed linen to see if it were well aired, and had just seated herself in a tempting easy chair when a knock at the door startled them. Miss Gale opened the door and took from the messenger a box addressed to Miss Harding.

"Who can it be?" asked Elizabeth in surprise.

"It must be flowers," replied her aunt.

"But who could have known we were here? We have not seen any one we know," urged Elizabeth.

Aunt Martha hoped and half expected who was the sender, yet there was some eager curiosity in her manner as she leaned over Elizabeth's shoulder to peer at the enclosed card of Mr. James Sterling. Miss Martha approved and leaning over to inhale the fragrance of the Colonial roses said, "How very kind and thoughtful of Mr. Sterling! Don't you think he is the nicest man you ever met?"

Elizabeth's color brightened, but she did not reply at once. Miss Gale waited, attributing her niece's manner to shyness, an aspect of the situation which she considered very hopeful.

"Yes, Elizabeth, we have seen a great deal of him this summer," and considering the lack of

enthusiasm which her niece had shown said, reproachfully, "For my part, I can't see how any girl can help being interested in such a high-bred gentleman. Unless all signs fail, I think Mr. Sterling is in love with my niece."

"No, auntie, I don't think so. He just likes me as a friend. The same as I do him."

"But," interrupted her aunt, "friendship often ripens into love. Don't be foolish, dear. You certainly would not throw away the affections of such a gentleman. It certainly would give me great happiness if you two could be happy together."

The conversation was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone and Elizabeth took down the receiver.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Sterling. How are you? It's so nice to hear your voice again. Thank you for the lovely roses. It was indeed a surprise. Certainly, Mr. Sterling, we shall be most pleased to have you dine with us. It will seem quite like old times. It would be very nice, but I'm not sure about Aunt Martha; she may be too tired."

Elizabeth turned toward her aunt and said, "Mr. Sterling is coming to dinner with us and would like to get tickets for the theater. What reply shall I give him?"

Miss Gale grew animated as she quickly replied, "By all means, ask him to dine with us. You must

go to the theater, but as for me I fear I must decline as we will journey on to Sefton to-morrow. Please thank him for me. I am sorry not to accept his kind invitation."

Elizabeth gave the message and hung up the receiver. She really felt very happy at the thought of renewing what had been almost a daily intercourse while they were traveling. She had missed him on the steamer coming home and her heart had cheered at the sound of his clear manly voice. She liked to watch the keen expression of interest in his blue eyes.

James Sterling was always learning, whether standing before a wonderful painting in art galleries or before the homes of the peasants. He was enriched by the contact always carrying with him some fresh idea and adding to his store of useful information unlike the tourists who preferred to play bridge in the hotels. He was ever on the alert for hidden mysteries even when they were only about the birds and flowers in the summer time.

In her room, while dressing for dinner, Elizabeth reviewed the pleasant hours which she acknowledged had been most profitable to her education. Especially had she found them so when visiting the battlefields of France. It seemed as she looked back upon that period during the war

that her mind had been partially obscured as her memory failed in locating places and names, but James Sterling could not only explain the places with their thrilling events but dates were equally well fixed in his mind. It all came before her now, the advantage of his comradeship. The startling assumption of her aunt that this man undoubtedly cared for her other than as a friend, aroused in her for the first time a feeling of mistrust regarding her own feelings toward him. It seemed to arouse something new in her experience. She acknowledged that with the exception of her father he was by far the nicest man she had ever met. Could it be an awakening of romance which shelters love? "I would above all things like to please aunty and if possible will try, but what if she is mistaken? I really think that he cares as much for Miss Martha Gale as he does for me." She pinned some of the roses to her belt and as they met in the parlor she was indeed a picture of youth and radiant beauty. So thought James Sterling as he took her hand and gazed steadily into her liquid brown eyes. He detected to his joy a self-consciousness in her manner unnoticed before. This was naturally due to the conversation held by Aunt Martha and Elizabeth before his arrival.

At dinner they talked over the events that had

taken place during the interval of separation. James was pondering over this new phase in the affair nearest his heart. Miss Martha, too, when engaged in conversation, was thinking of what ought to be, with glances from one to the other. As she sipped her coffee this cry ran in her heart, "I cannot meet two great disappointments in one lifetime, my own and Elizabeth's." As they left the dining room, eyes fastened upon the strikingly handsome couple following the stately lady.

After pacing the corridor several times, Miss Gale who was always early in fixing the time for starting, suggested that Elizabeth get on her evening wrap. Then she said apologetically to Mr. Sterling, "You will be late for the play."

Elizabeth made no comment as this feature in her aunt was strongly rooted, but hastened to comply with her wishes. Mr. Sterling and Miss Gale sought a seat on a near by divan. Miss Gale remarked with more or less pride, "Elizabeth is a dear girl. She is conscientious to a fault."

James Sterling replied, "You are very fortunate to have such a splendid niece."

When Elizabeth came they started forth with Miss Gale's usual admonition, "Don't be too late."

The play was diverting—a mixture of love, poetry and romance with melodramatic touches.

The hero was finally rewarded by the hand of the fair lady who had led him about in devious ways. James admitted it was worth while, but Elizabeth was impatient at the girl that resorted to such wiles to win her heart's desire.

"Perhaps she did not know her mind at first," suggested James.

"She ought to have known it," was the quick reply.

They were walking back to the hotel. He had suggested a taxi, but her preference was to walk.

"I had so little exercise while crossing," she said, "that it seems good just to walk. I long to get to Sefton and roam about the grounds and the woods, but I expect the Dodge will tempt me beyond my strength. I do so like to run a car. In a way they seem so powerful, and to control and master this great power seems almost to exalt me for the time at least."

"May I indulge a hope that you will allow me to be with you some time and share in your exultation over power?" he asked.

She had her hand on his arm, and he felt the gentle pressure of her hand upon his sleeve as she chatted in her usual happy manner. Her nearness made his cause seem more favorable. His courage was rising. Would he be lost if he hesitated?

Elizabeth felt happy. She knew she was not in-

different to the handsome man that walked so protectingly by her side. Her heart timidly imagined "What would it be to have such a protector?" A short pause followed. The girl, who had less at stake, was the first to speak.

"I have some good news for you, Mr. Sterling. My mother is coming this week to spend a little time at Aunt Martha's. Under ordinary circumstances I would go home to be with my invalid father, but a cousin has offered to stay with him while my mother is absent. The change will do her a great deal of good. I suppose that it is very selfish in me to desire to be at Sefton this beautiful autumn. The surroundings at Aunt Martha's home are all so beautiful and the interior is so restful. Aunty has a perfect system. There is no confusion; everything goes by rule. Mother says, and she isn't the least bit sacreligious, 'that it's a kind of heavenly rest to be there.' "

During the remainder of the walk to the hotel there was not a favorable moment in which the eager man could change the subject. When he attempted to break in she eluded him. James Sterling was not discouraged and when he left her that night he was stronger in his resolve that Elizabeth Harding should become his wife.

CHAPTER XV

THE days passed swiftly, each one making its own history. Ernest Maysfield was eagerly pursuing his studies for the ministry. The Theological Seminary, an institution of acknowledged supremacy, was located at Glenford. Ernest commuted as the distance between Glenford and Parkington made it possible. He knew it was an advantage to him that he would gain help and inspiration from daily intercourse from his father.

There was to be a quiet celebration in honor of the fifty-seventh birthday of Reverend Amos Maysfield. Aunt Polly and Mildred were busy with mysteries which were to be uncovered at the dinner table. The reverend gentleman was not supposed to know of these preparations and his son wondered just why his father wore an expression of happiness. Could the fact of increasing years, which weaken our power for usefulness, bring joy to the heart? Mildred, too, observed that Aunt Polly was different. She bore almost the air of a demure young maiden expecting her lover. There was something unexplainable in the household air. Rev. Amos had on his Sunday coat several hours before dinner in hope of hurrying

the ceremonies, which Aunt Polly, to the surprise of the younger members of the family, actually kept dinner waiting fully fifteen minutes in order to wear her most becoming lace piece which was an abbreviation of the olden time cap, and as she took her seat at the foot of the table she wore a slightly fluttered air of embarrassment. Ernest and Mildred were sensitive to changes as children are who live with positive and methodical persons. Their father's blessing at the table was longer and he dwelt upon his new blessing with beaming gratitude. During the dinner, Aunt Polly seemed to avoid their eyes and the undertone of happiness was felt but not spoken. After dinner Amos invited them to his study where the birthday gifts were to be opened. The fountain pen from his son, the white silk handkerchiefs with his initials embroidered by her own hands from his daughter, and the tempting looking knitted slippers, the work of Aunt Polly. "All were useful and most acceptable," reiterated the Rev. Amos, and suddenly placing his hand in his vest pocket he held a small box and standing before them he said, "I thank you most heartily for your kindness in remembering my fifty-seventh birthday with these tokens of your love for me. In return, I shall make you a gift which I am sure will add to your happiness now, and in all the years to come. Your

dear departed mother asked me to make this gift to you. It is now in my power to do so."

Stepping forward he took Aunt Polly by the hand saying, "This dear woman is to bear a double relationship to us all. Let me introduce you to your new mother."

Ernest and Mildred rushed forward embracing Aunt Polly with expressions of sincere joy, while their father placed a sparkling ring he had taken from the small box in his hand upon the third finger of Aunt Polly's left hand.

The new life at the parsonage was perfectly agreeable to Ernest and Mildred. The latter saw her way clear to take up in earnest her nurse's training at the hospital. Ernest was made more thoughtful as he witnessed the daily happiness that came from this union. The natural instinct for a companion to make life more complete as the Creator designed it to be he nursed dreamily in his heart. "Would future love treat him likewise?" he questioned.

Since the night of the dance at the La Belle Maison, he knew that he was going farther away from his early love. Evelyn Durand would never consent to become a minister's wife, and if she did she would never be in sympathy with his work for her interests were elsewhere. He knew the work of renunciation was at his hand, the situa-

tion was like unto the breaking of a much prized vase or piece of china. He would gather the pieces and put them together so that the untrained eye would not see the blemishes. If he could not convert her to his life, he must make an effort to save her from intrigues of weak and tarnished minds. The conversation in the garden between Tom Evans and Evelyn on the night of the dance made a deep impression on his mind. The projected joy ride troubled him.

One evening, a week later, he was prompted to call up the Durands and inquire for Evelyn. Mrs. Durand said that she had been visiting Eva Lockwood and had been expected home to-day, but a picnic party was on and it would be over too late for her to return home.

"Thank you," replied Ernest. "I was only coming over to call, but will do so some other time."

It took only a few minutes for Ernest to decide what course to pursue. Uncle John had presented them with a Ford car on his brother's birthday. It was new and in perfect condition. He looked at his watch. It was nine-thirty. It would take an hour and a half to reach the roadhouse. That would mean eleven o'clock. He paced the floor with his hands in his pockets. He went out into

the night. It was dark with lowering clouds. This settled it for him. He would go. There would be more danger of an accident after the party had left the roadhouse on such a night as this. "I will go," he said, and taking a thin coat from the clothes rack in the hall, he drew a soft, gray felt hat well down on his brow, felt in his pocket for his latch key, drew on his coat and with rapid steps followed the path to the garage. He turned his car toward the south and with only his troubled thoughts for companions, he drove with careful hand into the darkness, relieved only by the lights of his car. He was not quite sure of his route, but knew from a hasty examination of the Road Book that there were few turns from the highway. He kept on at a steady pace running at the same speed all the way. He lost his way only once when he should have turned to the right instead of the east. This mistake caused him to make a troublesome detour. When he reached the vicinity of the roadhouse, he left his car a short distance away and walked around the place. He found only two cars, a roadster and a small truck. He returned to his car and had hardly seated himself when he heard an automobile approaching from the opposite direction. The sound of voices vibrated gaily on the gentle currents of the night

air. The loudest voice he recognized as belonging to Tom Evans.

"By golly," he said in a flippant voice, "we are here at last. I'm ready for refreshments. No, you weren't a bit heavy, Evelyn. I could have carried you on my knees until doomsday."

There was more laughter and loud talking before the last one was out of the car. The lights, fortunately for Ernest, shone in the direction in which they were moving. As the door of the place opened he could see distinctly that their heads were bare and that Evelyn's hat was in her hand. Some one came back and turned off the lights of the car and then the door was closed and darkness was all about. Ernest waited several minutes before he made any attempt to watch the party. He walked around the house until he satisfied himself about in which part they were to be. Sounds of mirth soon located it for him. The night was warm. One of the windows was partly down from the top. As he drew near he could hear what was said and he found a slight opening in the heavy curtain that gave him the view he wanted. As they surrounded the table Tom Evans drew Evelyn toward him and she took the chair next to him. Tom was master of ceremonies and he ordered a bottle of claret, an eye opener, as he called it. This was to be followed by a stiff cock-

tail, he explained to the waiter, "none of your soft affairs." They drank the wine, exclaiming that it was fine. "One gets so thirsty riding." Soup followed the wine which was purposely well salted and helped to increase the thirst. Tom patted Evelyn familiarly on the cheek, then gave an order for welsh rare-bit to the waiter who had just served the cocktail. Evelyn looked at Eva a little nervously and turning to Tom said, "How is it made? What is it made of?"

"Just something to quench the thirst and make you feel like a king," was his reply.

His explanation did not prove satisfactory, neither did the concoction look attractive. Evelyn drew back, saying, "I guess I won't take mine. I think a glass of lemonade will quench my thirst best of all."

Eva interrupted, "It's all right, Evelyn; all the fashionable people take these as a matter of course. I want to get used to them and then they will not stimulate me more than they ought to. Sip it slowly, just as I do."

Evelyn shook her head gravely, "But suppose it should make me sick?"

"It never will," retorted Tom assuringly. "Come on, my dearest, be a good sport. Let's hurry up as we want a good whirl while here. We will call out the old fellow that plays the fiddle."

Evelyn resisted until Tom, taking the glass, placed it to her reluctant lips, whispering in her ear as his lips brushed her cheeks, "Taste it, dearie, it will be delicious." He drawled the last words, smacking his lips. Tom saw that Evelyn was an easy prey to his pranks and his face beamed with satisfaction as she took one sip after another.

"That's the right spirit, old girl," said Tom triumphantly as he patted her on the back. She yielded to his applause to avoid the mocking tone in his words as he jested promiscuously about infants and pussy cats with their eye teeth uncut. Ernest felt that the time for his interference was near, as he eyed the scene with every nerve strung to its highest pitch.

He clenched and unclenched his hands. "What would the Saviour have done at such a time?" His first impulse was to step into their midst and preach to them, confront them with their evil ways and point them to better ones. No, sterner means must be used. They were in no condition to be converted to better things. He almost gasped as he saw Evelyn's body swaying until her head rested on Tom's shoulder. His arm encircled her; he even dared to kiss her as he said in a maudlin tone, "Lie still, dearie. Take a little

nap on his nib's arm. Then we will have a jazz together."

Ernest was a man of powerful strength; good habits and the work on his uncle's farm had kept him strong of muscle. Besides he had no fear where right was concerned. He knew that it would be a difficult matter for a stranger to enter this house without some previous plan for the evening.

"I must and will get in," was his resolution. After I am in, I can meet the rest all right."

He threw his coat aside, tore off his collar and tie, ruffled his hair, placed his hat rakishly on one side of his head and advanced to the door, knocking gently. An elderly, villainous looking old chap opened the door a crack. "What's wanted," he said, "at this hour of the night?"

"I'll tell you, old crab," drawled Ernest, "if you will open the door a little wider for a fellow that's mighty hungry and tired."

The man ventured to widen the gap that he might have a better look at the intruder.

"Are you the boss?" asked Ernest.

"I'm the man," and he bowed his head.

"Well then, I want to tell you something. Let me in for I'm tired and hungry and in trouble."

Sufficiently convinced that this young fellow could not be a troublesome guest, he threw open

the door, saying, "Come in, my fellow, what's ailing you?"

"You're sure you're the proprietor of this joint?" inquired Ernest for the second time.

"Sure, dead sure, I've lived here for forty years, most ever since the Civil War," replied the man.

Ernest felt there was no time for reminiscences, and he drew nearer this species of vagabond, whispering in a low voice, "You see, my best girl that I took to a dance the other night is here with another fellow and I've come in to get her. I won't make any trouble for you, sir. She will come right along with me as soon as she sees me. You see how it is, old boss. The situation is perfectly clear to your mind?"

"You won't get into any row, will you? We like to keep out of the newspapers," the keeper said, "for we keep a first-class place."

"Never fear," said Ernest, "I would not like to get my name in the paper either."

He gave the old man a significant wink with his right eye, as he said, "I will step into the restaurant and she will come right along with me without the slightest resistance. That will be the end of it as far are you are concerned."

Several sleepy men playing poker at small tables were too stupid to pay any attention to

anything but themselves. Ernest passed the players and idlers who were smoking their pipes with the same dazed looks on their faces. Odors of strong drinks and sounds of revelry filled the place. Ernest entered at the right. The entrance was partly hidden by several brightly colored Japanese screens, colored electric lights bewildered the looker on, while gilt edged mirrors stared at him in every direction. Ernest pushed steadily forward, but seemed not to be observed until he reached the table where the object of his coming was lying almost unconscious, still in the arms of Tom Evans. As Earnest stood before them, Tom looked at him as if he were dreaming.

"What brought you here, Old Guy? We never invited you," said Tom.

Ernest spoke in terms not to be misunderstood, "Unhand that girl," he said, "You cur! You vile wretch!"

Tom refused to comply with this demand. "Once more I command you to release her." Tom did not move, but fixed a glassy stare on Ernest. He shouted, "Get out of here, you cur! You graven image! Nobody wants you here. If —if it were not for this dear peach I am embarrassing I would knock your d—— head off."

Ernest could stand no more. With a firm grip he unfastened the arms that held Evelyn, and

taking her gently in his own started with her out of the room. Evelyn herself was too far gone to know what was taking place about her. Ernest strode through the rooms with Evelyn in his arms. The others paid little if any attention to his act. Old Milton, the landlord, who had been quietly eavesdropping, opened the door while Ernest and his burden passed out into the darkness. Lifting her quickly on to the seat and wrapping his coat about her, he turned his car and was soon on the way toward home.

He had no fear that the party would follow him. Tom Evans was too much of a coward to invite public censure. No, he would keep quiet and work out his revenge in some other way, and he was sure that the other members of the party were so stupefied that they would soon turn their faces homeward. His action had made the joy ride a failure, and the devil could not do his perfect work. The jolting and fresh air helped to rouse Evelyn, who groaned several times, and, as they were nearing Parkington murmured, "Where are we, Tom? Don't give me any more of that horrid drink."

"No, Evelyn," replied Ernest. "You are safe. I am going to take you to spend the night with your friend Mildred."

"No, no, I'm not going there. Take me to Eva's, I'm visiting her," murmured Evelyn.

"You are going to see Mildred," replied Ernest in a firm tone.

It was after midnight when Ernest stood at his father's door supporting the half-unconscious girl. He quietly unlocked the door and cautiously crept along the dark hall, entered the living room, and after carefully placing Evelyn on the davenport, ascended the stairway and entered his sister's room. Mildred was a light sleeper.

"Mildred, sister dear," whispered Ernest. "Are you awake? Evelyn Durand is here. She will spend the night with you. We were at a party and she was taken sick and not wishing to frighten her mother, I have brought her here. It was something served for refreshments that upset her."

Mildred rose quickly and dressing in her kimono and slippers followed her brother to the room below. Evelyn had not sufficiently gained consciousness to understand all that had happened, but she seemed satisfied as she saw the faces of her old friends.

"Erny, Mildred," she murmured.

"Let her rest just as she is," said Ernest. "She will be all right in the morning."

Mildred unfastened Evelyn's clothing, removed

her shoes, and covered her with the tenderness of a sister.

Mildred evidently understood the situation, for after leaving Evelyn in profound sleep she sought her brother, whom she found walking to and fro in the long living room.

"Erny, Erny," she said as she placed her head on her brother's shoulder. Tears flowed from her tender heart. "What can be done?"

"We won't settle that to-night," said her brother as he gently moved her head from his shoulder. "Poor misguided child, we must pray for her, sister dear. Good-night, or rather good-morning."

"But Ernest you must go to bed yourself. You have to be at the Seminary to-morrow," eagerly protested Mildred.

He did not answer, but hastily went to his room and the slumber that came in the few morning hours that were left to him, was full of troubled dreams. High mountains rose before him. "They can never be climbed," he thought, for after each struggle he slipped to the bottom again. "I must face this alone and I will conquer." He ceased to climb in his own strength, and after casting his burden on the Lord the ascent was made easily.

CHAPTER XVI

WHEN Evelyn Durand awoke the next morning from her unpleasant experience at the Road House, she could not connect herself with the present. She turned restlessly about. She had a wretched headache, and kept wondering what had happened. A glimpse of Mildred in the hall just outside her door brought her partially to a realization of what had occurred. She pitiously exclaimed, raising herself to a half-sitting posture, "It was awful bad, Mildred, and I feel as though I never wanted to look anyone in the face again." Then leaning forward as she rested on her elbows, "For heaven's sake, Mildred, I hope that your family is ignorant of my presence here."

Mildred approached the bed, and laying her hand on Evelyn's forehead smilingly reassured her that her father and his wife had left on the early train and would not return until evening.

"Your hands feel so cool and refreshing. My head is hot. Do you suppose I have a fever?" questioned Evelyn.

"No, I think not," responded Mildred. "Let me bathe it for you, and then, perhaps, you will take some fruit for breakfast."

"Thank you, Milly, you always were a dear, but just now, I do not feel worthy of your kind attentions. I really think the thing I need most is to get up and go out into the fresh air."

Suiting her action to her words, she threw back the covering, and bringing her feet languidly to the floor, she observed that she had been sleeping with her clothes on.

"Why didn't you let me undress?" she pettishly asked. "No wonder I feel bum, and it's owing to your sanctimonious brother."

"But," said Mildred, "he thought he was doing you a kindness."

"I certainly don't see it in that light," protested Evelyn. "I don't think he had any business to be spying into my affair," and she continued more indignantly. "It was dirty mean in him to do so, to place me in such an embarrassing position here, and with my friends, also." She paused a moment, and then with more vigor said, "How did he know where I was anyhow?"

During this tirade, Mildred's face wore a look of surprise that settled into sadness. She wished to defend her brother, but did not know what to say.

"As I understand it," she ventured, "Ernest was out with his car. It was dark, and another car was rapidly coming towards him. He stopped

and the large car turned into the Road House. As the merry crowd alighted he recognized your voice, and knowing the reputation of the House, he felt anxious for fear that harm would come to you. So he went in, and when he saw what the deadly mixture had done to you, he just brought you to a place of safety."

Evelyn advanced to the dressing table, brushed her short bobbing locks, nodding her head from one side to the other. She nervously fingered the toilet articles. Then she demanded, "What right had he to assume that my friends would not take care of me? Eva Lockwood is my best friend, and her Cousin Tom is all right. He enjoys a little fling now and then as every normal fellow is supposed to do. Tom says his dad is very strict with him, even prohibits the movies, only once in a while. Tom says his father was gay himself, overheard one of his friends who went about with him when he was a young man ask, 'Do you remember, Tom, that night we went on a spree, over at Larkhurst, and you lit your cigar with a five dollar bill? You did and the gang thought it a great joke.' Dad tried to hush him up, but I noticed both laughed at the memory of their escapade."

"I suppose," thoughtfully remarked Mildred, "that one sometimes forgets the silly pranks of

youth. Does Eva's mother approve of her doing these things?"

"No," answered Evelyn, "she would not have approved of her going to the Road House, but she tells Eva that it is quite another thing to drink a cocktail at the home of the fashionable friends, for it is the custom to serve it, and she thinks it's better for Eva to get accustomed to it, and then it will not upset her."

"Has the custom become so general?" inquired Mildred. "I go out to dinners so little that I do not know what is expected of an invited guest."

"Of course they expect you to be polite and partake of what they place before you," said Evelyn.

"But if one cannot conscientiously do so they must keep away from society dinners," returned Mildred.

"Certainly," impatiently retorted Evelyn. "Such affected persons had better stay away. They must have a hard time of it. Eva says, 'they are putting it all on and trying to be conspicuous. No one wants to turn a dinner into a prayer meeting.' "

Evelyn advanced to the window and nervously turned the ring on the pull end of the gray shade. Her eyes were dull, her head heavy, and her whole person weary. Mildred sat in a wicker

chintz covered rocker; she seemed in deep thought for a while. Then she soberly remarked, "Your mother, too, is willing that you do some of these things?"

Evelyn tossed her head defiantly, and cast an angry look at Mildred over her left shoulder. "My mother," she emphasized, "is willing that I should have a good time, thank heaven for that. What would be the use of going anywhere unless I could have a little fun? Mother says I must not go too far. You can sip the drinks and you will be quite safe. Some of the older ones have the most fun, I imagine. Eva's father and mother took dinner down at Judge Hedgeway's. It must have been great fun. General Graft was there and other notables. Well, through the strong cocktails they became quite silly. It is a scream to see those usually dignified people actually silly. I wish I had been there."

"Do you think," observed Mildred, "that your respect for those dignitaries would be as great after seeing them in this condition as before?"

"Why not?" impatiently replied Evelyn. "How could just making a little fun hurt anyone?"

"But," slowly responded Mildred, "Aren't there different kinds of fun, some that do not conflict with principle?"

Evelyn looked at her wrist watch, saying, "You are getting too deep for me and I must get home. I want mother to think I came on the eleven-twenty train. As soon as it whistles I shall start."

"But you will surely eat something before going," and Mildred rose, and took Evelyn's arm.

"No thank you," objected Evelyn, "I couldn't possibly eat a thing." Then impulsively freeing her arms she threw both arms around Mildred and kissed her several times.

"Some way, Mildred, you were always destined to be good. With me it is different. I'm sure I was designed to be a boy. All my tastes are like boys'. I don't want to do anything really bad, but I just like to reach out and take a fling, as they say. I have no desire to be just a woman, to fulfill her mission by sitting amiably by the fireside, purring like a domestic cat with someone to tell me what to do and what I'd better not do. I believe I have a man's taste and would not care to train children. Twice a day would be sufficient to play or talk with them. I like men the best when they say nice things to me, and consider it a privilege to send me candy and flowers."

"But don't you ever expect to fall in love and marry some nice man?" interrupted Mildred in an astonished voice.

"I don't think I shall ever be so foolish,"

replied Evelyn. "I like to be admired and to be independent and do as I please. I have a secret, but I don't mind telling you. I am going on the stage. I want a profession. In this you get admiration and attention, and can mingle with others that have some life in them. Are you shocked, Mildred?" Evelyn glanced at the gentle face so close to her. There was a shade of restlessness in the calm soul of Mildred Maysfield. In spite of Evelyn's pent up enthusiasm for the moment she wished that she were like Mildred. Did she feel so peacefully happy? Happy as she looked? The whistle of the train for Parkington was heard, causing Evelyn to jam on her hat. As she did so, she said, "Don't tell anyone of my plans, please."

Mildred nodded her willingness to keep the secret. She said, "I ought in return to confide my plans to you. I am studying to be a trained nurse. Evelyn's look of amazement soon passed. "Bully for you," she said, "When I get to be a broken down actress, you'll nurse me, won't you?"

"Perhaps you will change your mind and not go on the stage, after all," hopefully rejoined Mildred.

"Perhaps and perhaps not," she laughingly threw back at Mildred, adding, "Where is Erny

this morning? I don't want to run into him."

"O Erny went to town early, there will be no danger of meeting him."

"Ernest is studying for the ministry," volunteered Mildred. There was a look of amazement on Evelyn Durand's face, but only for a second or two. Regaining herself, she merrily exclaimed, "Gee, what a pious crank he will make. Ask him as a favor for me, that he preach his first sermon on the Golden Rule."

Passing out she halted a moment at the door, saying, "My message to him is that I detest his ways and hope never to see him again. Good-bye, Mildred, I am sorry to have caused you so much trouble. Thank you, good-bye."

Mildred cast a pitiful glance after the young misguided girl, wondering meanwhile, "What does make the difference in people? Is it the bringing up or is it the environment, or is it heredity?"

Evelyn endeavored to take on her usual brisk swaying gait but in spite of herself her steps dragged. She felt miserable as she soliloquized, "I feel so dull and stupid. That Maysfield family always has that effect on my nerves. They carry that superior air of contentment. They make one feel they have an option on happiness. It irritates me. I think that they are only stupidly

happy. Erny has changed so much since the old days when we went skating together. Now," she sighed heavily, "he stands around like a solemn old owl. Doesn't care to take part in anything that's fun. He frowns on everything we do." Evelyn continued these denunciations, confessing to herself that she liked Tom Evans a great deal better. She continued, "I really am provoked at him now for he had no business to insist upon my drinking a cocktail when I had never tasted one before. Believe me, I will give him the cold stare the next time we meet. If I could have had a cigarette or two when I first woke up, I'm sure my head would be dandy now, but," she added ironically, "I don't believe the Maysfields would touch a cigarette with a pair of tongs."

Evelyn found her mother taking a late breakfast in her room. She was in a pink crepe negligee and saluted her daughter by explaining, "Your father and I were at a late card party at Mrs. Downes Upson's. The game was very interesting for we played for stakes. I won several, but your father was behind, and it lowered his temperature for the game."

"But, mother," interrupted Evelyn, "you used to say it was not right to play for money."

"No, no, no," drawled Mrs. Durand, biting off a piece of toast between her thumb and forefinger,

followed by several sips of coffee. She evidently was taking time to frame a satisfactory reply.

"I do think it is wrong for poor people to play for money because if they lose they have to go without things they need. It is different with the people that have means. For instance, Mr. Upson can afford to lose a few dollars just to make it more exciting."

"How can that be?" demanded Evelyn. "Do I understand that the only difference is in the kind of people that do it?"

"Assuredly so," replied her mother, "a kind of reward of merit for the best players such as you used to get at school for the best lessons."

Evelyn continued her interrogations, "If there is no harm in it, why do they arrest gamblers?"

"That's because they don't know when to stop, and that is the trouble with drinking," stated Mrs. Durand.

"O, I suppose so," admitted Evelyn. "I must take a bath and change my dusty dress."

Evelyn was relieved when the subject was averted by her mother asking, "Did you have a nice time at your party? Where did you go and whom did you go with?"

"Just Eva and Tom and a boy and girl friend of his. We first went to the movies at New Glen-

ford and coming home we stopped at an inn for refreshments.''

''Was it Rose Sister's Tea House?'' asked her mother. ''They dress alike in quaint costumes and serve delicious things. It must have been late, for you look all fagged out.''

''Yes, it was late, everything is late, because there is no time. Tony is barking. I will go and take him out,'' said Evelyn.

Mrs. Durand pushed her tray aside and leaning back in her easy chair wondered if it would not be a good thing to take her daughter to Atlantic City for two weeks. The child looks so sallow when she is not made up. She ought not to fade at eighteen.

CHAPTER XVII

"MY LORDY," exclaimed Mrs. Jones as she looked out of the west window from her place at the dinner table, "if there ain't Deacon Stebbins coming across lots. I do hope he isn't headed for here."

"What matters it?" demanded Abe in the act of raising to his mouth a generous helping of boiled cabbage that was well poised on the end of his knife.

"I should say it did, Abe Jones," observed his wife tartly, as she rose to her feet to obtain a better view of the expected visitor.

With one hand she unfastened her work apron and then with both hands nervously smoothed back her hair.

"It's he, Abe. Be sure to take him into the sitting room. It is not fit for him to sit here." She supplemented this advice by going into the adjoining room, raising a shade by the pull cord, then returning it to its old position. In her haste she sacrificed a cambric handkerchief that was tied loosely around her throat as an emergency dust cloth and swiftly removed every particle of dust from the black walnut center table, from the mantelpiece, and from an old-fashioned arm

chair, the latter being an heirloom in the Jones family. After these preliminary skirmishes with imaginary dust and disorder the room looked exactly the same to a discerning observer. However, it served to relieve the sudden strain on her nerves, for Mrs. Jones was an exacting housekeeper, always in gear at high speed. As she returned to the dining room her husband was scraping the last morsel from his plate, leaving his knife and fork crosswise.

"Abe," repeated his wife, "be sure you take him into the other room and don't ask him to take off his coat. If the Deacon should take a chill in our house Nancy Stebbins would never get through talking about it, and you know as well as I," she continued with asperity, "that we never have enough wood cut to spare a stick for the airtight stove in the sitting room. It may be a little damp because the door has been closed all the morning on account of the cabbage cooking."

Abe rose and pushed his chair under the table, while his wife escaped to the kitchen and stationed herself in a corner, near the red painted cupboard, waiting for the Deacon to announce his arrival. While waiting for his visitor Abe took from his pocket a red cotton handkerchief, wiped his mouth, and after running his fingers through his light brown hair, had barely time to fasten

the first button on his rusty brown coat before three successive knocks each louder than the foregoing sounded on the door.

Abe swung it open to its full width, this being his password for hospitality. "Good afternoon, Deacon Stebbins, how's your health to-day?"

"Howdy," replied the Deacon, "May I come in?"

Abe following the Deacon's example ignored his greeting with the remark, "It's a fine day. Did you bring over the *Saturday Evening Post?*" Abe stepped back, and with a mute gesture ushered in his august visitor. "Come right in, Deacon, mighty glad to see you," and reaching for the nearest chair, said cheerfully, "Take a seat." Before the Deacon could comply with Abe's request an ominous sound came from the kitchen, as if a stove lifter had fallen to the floor. This sound reminded Abe of his wife's demand that he take the visitor to the sitting room.

"This way, Deacon," hurriedly ejaculated Abe. "Maria Jane has to clear the dinner table and would be bashful to do it in your presence."

"That's all right," said the Deacon, and he followed Abe with a slow and pompous tread into the sitting room. Deacon Stebbins commanded great respect in the rural neighborhood.

Abe endeavored to appear at ease and cover his

embarrassment with an excess of cordiality. He suggestively pointed to the large arm chair, but the Deacon, like many persons of corpulent figure, after adroitly inspecting the room, selected a small rocking chair in the farthest corner.

"How's business?" began the Deacon as he adjusted his portly body to the rather small dimensions of the rocker. He wriggled from one side to the other, leaning forward, then back, and with a final effort to be comfortable clasped his hands to support his abnormally large abdomen.

"Nothing to brag of," said Abe. "We manage to keep along some way. I just make a living."

Abe had a morbid suspicion that the Deacon was there to get something out of him besides responsive talk. "You're a lucky man, Abe, that you have only yourself and wife to provide for, not a lot of hangers on," growled the Deacon.

There was silence for a time, Abe discreetly waiting for the Deacon's next plunge. It came, in a tone tinged with curious impatience, "Why on earth Abner don't you go to church any more? You surely ought not to neglect divine service. Our members are growing less and our minister's salary is behind. Now," emphatically continued the Deacon, "as a prosperous business man you ought to help us out. I am one of a committee

especially appointed to come here and inquire into the cause of your back-sliding."

The Deacon's eyes bulged out beneath his shaggy brows. He hemed and hawed, clasping his fingers tighter in their work of support. As Abe remained silent, the Deacon chirruped, "How is it? What reasonable excuse can you give, Abner?"

Abner, who had been slouching in his chair, sat upright, and placing a thumb in the arm-hole of his vest, said, "Deacon, I don't mind telling you why I don't go to church. It's simply because I don't enjoy the preaching."

A look of surprise and astonishment settled on the face of Deacon Stebbins, "Tut, tut, man, what do you mean?" he ejaculated.

"I mean just what I say," reiterated Abe. "When I was a boy they gave us something to think about during the week, something that would help us to resist evil. Now they talk about the duty of the employer to the employed. To my mind it is better to keep these mix-ups out of the pulpit. They discuss the right of the poor man to play base ball on Sunday, because the rich man plays golf. Now that's all right as far as it goes, but what I want them to explain is what is the right thing toward God. Is there a higher right than exists between the rich and the poor? Shall

we give up the holy Sabbath Day in order to adjust the rights of men. My father used to say that 'in Parson Mayflower's day, he had seen him hold a sinner over Hades by a single hair of the head.' "

An audible groan came from the corner where the Deacon sat. "Yes," he said solemnly, "I, too, remember that kind of preaching. It was rather perilous to say the least. The present style of preaching is much pleasanter," and the Deacon brought his lips together with a satisfied smack.

"On the contrary," said Abe, "I much prefer the perilous pictures as you call them."

"Perhaps," interrupted the Deacon, "you are being educated by the moving pictures, to enjoy thrills. I fear they are intruding into your love of worship; therefore, you neglect the house of God. I believe they are a curse to a small town like ours."

"What's the difference?" asked Abe. "One must be stirred up some way to turn one's eyes to the perils of a sinful life. What good is a sermon? I believe in the doctrine of a loving father, but I also think there will be justice mingled with his mercy. I've heard Selina Clark say that her grandfather would take the first thing at hand to discipline his children, and his daughter Eunice kept a small stick on the buttery

shelf with which to chastise her children. She would hold the stick threateningly over the disobedient child, but it came no nearer. Eunice's daughter never disciplined her children at all. Now it seems to me that the grandfather's way was brutal, the second method was foolish, and the granddaughter's was wicked. So you see we go from one extreme to the other."

Abe's quick ear heard a step on the piazza. Rising, he said, "Excuse me, Deacon, someone is at the door."

To the surprise of both men, Mr. John Maysfield entered. "Good afternoon. Got company?" came from Uncle John all in one breath. "Why, it's Deacon Stebbins as large as life. How are you?" and he grasped the Deacon's hand. "How's Mrs. Stebbins?" he asked. "Hope she's well."

"Yes," drawled the Deacon. "She's pretty well, all but a slight attack of rheumatism."

"There's one thing about that disease," cheerfully submitted Uncle John. "It gives a woman a little time for rest. A woman's work is never done."

"True, Mr. Maysfield," replied the Deacon, "but when the screws tighten with rheumatism, it's not exactly what you would call rest."

This remark was followed by a dubious shake

of the Deacon's head. He in turn inquired for Mrs. Maysfield's health.

"She's fine," said Uncle John, "sprightly as a kitten. She doesn't seem a day older than when I married her."

"Humph," came from the corner.

"We were comparing the preaching of the present day with the past," ventured the Deacon. "Our friend Abe was trying to convince me that Parson Mayflower and his denunciation of sinners and his word pictures of their doom made better Christians than do the doctrines preached to-day by the Reverend Mr. Newberry."

"Ah, I see," said Uncle John. "The old time preachers were positive. Now they appear uncertain of their views. We are extremists on all subjects. The preacher to-day reads the sermon regarding the sheep being separated from the goats. He dwells largely upon the future happiness of the sheep. The old-time minister held up before us the doom of the goats. The middle man, so to speak, tries to do away with the punishment of the goats. In these days of self-adjusted religion, it does not seem quite popular to allude to the unfortunate situation of the goats. Now," emphatically urged Uncle John, "they are both to be recognized. We surely cannot do away with the line of demarcation between the sheep and the

goats, good or bad. To be sure the modern way is much easier for the goats."

"True," said the Deacon, "but we must remember that every tub has to stand on its own bottom."

"Yes," replied Uncle John, "but in that great day when the tubs are inspected, I'm afraid there will be some shaky foundations and rotten bottoms."

"I am confident," asserted Uncle John, "that all of our mistakes come from our extreme views on almost everything. Now, take the instance of the turning of the water into wine at the marriage of Cana. We have not been satisfied with the juice of the grape, but we must manufacture deadly concoctions of strong drink which never satisfy, but men keep on drinking them until principle and constitution are gone. Then a few wise prophets arise and both public and private legislation take place which prohibits personal destruction."

Uncle John rose to his feet and directing his conversation to Mr. Jones said, "Abner, don't stay away from church because Mr. Newberry doesn't bring to the front every Sunday all of the old-time doctrines. I suppose the present low rate of brotherly love usage is so apparent that our ministers think it the best text to bring before

us, but I don't believe," continued Uncle John, "that any amount of moral suasion or modern parable will do the work. It can be accomplished only by personal example attained from the principles that are born in a heart filled with religion." Deacon Stebbin's face wore a serene and sanctimonious expression as he slightly bowed his head as if in perfect accord with Uncle John's version of the situation.

Abner remained silently attentive. Uncle John looked from the corner to Abner as he resumed, "When a young man in business, Mr. Brady, a member of the firm, extended to me the invitation to sit in his pew at church. Whenever I heard that Dr. Traymore, who was an unusually eloquent preacher, was to be absent, I was strongly tempted not to attend church on Sunday. I resisted the temptation, however." Here Uncle John drew nearer to Mr. Jones and patting him on the shoulder said with considerable emphasis, "Let me tell you now, Abner, that I was always rewarded with something that the preacher said that helped me the rest of the week. The man that spends more time in studying the Life of Christ than he does over the genealogy of the ape is better fitted to direct us toward the Kingdom of Heaven. Just as you get the best information regarding the direction you wish to go from the

street urchin, rather than from the high-class college student. Continue in well doing, Abner. That's a mighty safe motto." As Mr. Maysfield finished speaking a satisfied hem-m-m came from the corner.

Abner rose to his feet. He was much impressed by this straight from the shoulder talk of John Maysfield. A merry twinkle appeared in Abner's eyes. He was about to speak but first cast a dubious glance at the Deacon. No one feared that John Maysfield would take a joke seriously. "I was about to say," said Abner, "that an irreverent chap came into the shop the other day and asked, with an air of superior knowledge, if I had heard the new commandment. 'What is it?' I asked suspiciously."

"Don't you know it?" he said with a smirk. "It's a new golden rule. Do up the other fellow before he does you."

Uncle John shook his head ruefully and in a pessimistic tone said, "No, Abner, you could only convert the blind to that rule and I fear that both of you would land in the ditch."

Then turning to Deacon Stebbins, he added, "Believe me, Deacon, we are a nation of extremists, who cannot hold to the happy medium. Therefore, it has to be intemperance or prohibition. Not much left now, but bread and milk for

drink, but,'' he added with a smile, ''the milk from my Jerseys is good enough for me.''

''I came over, Abner, to see if you could shoe my horses to-morrow and at what time,'' inquired Uncle John.

''Oh, about eight in the morning, if you choose,'' replied Abe.

''Good-day, Deacon Stebbins,'' and Uncle John went out.

The Deacon soon followed with the parting injunction that Abe would think better of Mr. Newberry's preaching and would also show some interest in the financial work of the church.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE autumn days were passing. Mrs. Harding and her daughter were to return to their home very soon. The pleasant days spent at Miss Martha Gale's would soon be over. James Sterling had seen Elizabeth frequently during her visit. Miss Gale had asked him to dinner a number of times, and he had taken Miss Martha, her sister, and Elizabeth to a tennis tournament at the Archer Club. From time to time unexpected meetings had also occurred, but he had found no opportunity to speak of the subject nearest his heart. He once casually remarked to her that she had promised to take him out in her Dodge. She laughingly added, "So that you may observe my skill in driving?"

"Let's go to-morrow," she suggested, "for the time is short now as we intend to go home the last of the week. You see my play days must end."

She had been vainly trying to disentangle the skeins of doubt that held the conviction that she did not care for James Sterling in the way she ought, if she were to marry him. She would like to please Aunt Martha. Her mother, too, had joined in her aunt's appeal, knowing that Mr. Sterling was an unusual character with such a

preponderance of kindness and high principles. It would be difficult to find another man so cultured and beneficent. They sang their praises until Elizabeth with the perversity of youth that prefers that romance should come without planning for it, began to look for faults. They were so few, however, that she was forced to agree with them that he was a rare gentleman. These ladies happily approved of the drive. Aunt Martha was delighted and discoursed at length on the fair weather. Her mother's face wore a steady smile of satisfaction as she advised her to wear the blue hat with the red roses. "They match your cheeks," and she patted them affectionately.

The next day at three o'clock Elizabeth drew up to the curb in front of the Colonial Bank & Trust Company. James Sterling, equally prompt, stood beside her, conscious that this was his golden opportunity and no time was to be lost. In preparing for this drive he had taken scrupulous care with his toilet. He wore the tie he had purchased in Paris, the one Elizabeth had told him matched his eyes. As he took a survey of himself in the mirrored door of his dressing room he could not fail to be pleased with the result. "Jim," he said, "you are not so bad looking after all, are you old fellow?" and his heart bounded with happy expectation. "If she were something of a flirt," he

mused, "it would assist me." And he admitted that it would be almost as easy to propose to Miss Gale as to Elizabeth.

At the same time, Olivia Thayer, his private stenographer, had noticed the hurried manner of the president and his failure to tell her that he was leaving early. She rose from her desk with the pretense of getting a paper, but, in reality, to look out of the window. Mary Wise, her assistant, fluttered at her work, making several mistakes, as her mind wandered, for she, too, was overcome by curiosity. Olivia, in passing, whispered in Mary's ear, "I guess that's a go. What a fortunate girl she is. They say she is very smart and very pretty. How is it," she impatiently asked, "that some people always have everything come their way?" With a lowering brow and martyr-like resignation, Olivia returned to her work.

The day was fine and a bluish gray haze hung low over the deeper blue of the distant hills. It stretched over the pastures and the closely cut hay field which was untouched by frost and was verdant as in springtime. It fell like a canopy across the furrows and torn fields bearing the unmistakable trail of the harvester. The foliage was coloring gloriously, the rich tints of red, gold and bronze fluttered in the bright sunlight. All seemed to pay tribute to the memory of the sum-

mer that had gone. It was not unlike life itself when age endeavors to bring back the spell of youth with undue colors and glittering ornaments, hoping to evade the time limit, the relentless destroyer of human joy.

"Did you ever go over to the Maysfield Farm—Maple Tree Farm, as it is usually called?" asked James Sterling. "It lies on a sloping hillside off from the main road. The hill in front of the house is rather steep and it takes a good car to climb it."

Elizabeth listened with unaffected interest. "I wonder," she quickly asked, "if that can be the hill that I attempted to climb without any gasoline. My attempt ended all right. A farmer boy supplied me with a gallon."

"The Maysfield's are a very nice family," remarked James Sterling. "John Maysfield at times does business with us."

"Have they daughters or sons?" modestly asked Elizabeth.

"No, I think not. The family consists only of Mr. and Mrs. Maysfield."

Elizabeth had of late been much pleased to be in James Sterling's company. Several times her color had heightened when he paid her a sudden compliment. He closely watched every change of expression on her lovely face.

Elizabeth was in a receptive mood. "It's a

whole year since I left school," she said gaily. "Do you like college girls? I have never heard you say."

"Yes," he said, with a speaking look into her eyes, "I like one very much."

Elizabeth parried by saying, "I mean the general college girl who knows a good deal and thinks she knows it all. A kind of conceit that isn't pretty."

In a calm clear manner he responded, "The girl I refer to has none of these faults."

They were now in the depths of the woodland. The scent of the dry leaves as exhilarating and like the quickening of springtime when hearts turn to thoughts of love. James suggested that they stop and enjoy to the full, the wonderful vista of beauty spread out before them. Elizabeth consented, stopped the car, and before her companion had time to speak exclaimed playfully, pointing to some tall chestnut trees, some twenty yards away, "Would you mind if I ran over to see if there were any chestnuts?"

"Not at all," willingly replied James. "I shall be happy to accompany you."

"I should be glad to have you," returned Elizabeth, "but I feel like a child who wishes to be a little fractious, just to run away and come back with a torn dress and flying hair." Without wait-

ing for his reply she darted across the road into the thicket in front of the tall chestnut trees. James Sterling watched the picture of radiant beauty and tried hard to keep from following her. She had learned to run at college games and soon stood under the sheltery tree with its bounty of chestnut burrs. She was struggling to open a large one when the sudden rustling of the dry leaves and the snapping of dry twigs around her caused her to look up. A tall man with a gun over his shoulder and a small dog trotting by his side stood almost within reach of where she was standing. A second look brought the color more freely to her cheeks as she recognized the hired man who had brought her the gasoline at the farm.

He removed his cap at this sudden vision of health and beauty. "I beg your pardon," he said, "I am afraid that I frightened you."

"Your coming was rather sudden," she answered. "That is why it startled me. I saw no one near."

"What were you doing?" he asked.

"Trying to extricate the chestnuts from their early home, but as you see, I have not succeeded very well," she said.

"Give me the pleasure of helping you," said the gunman.

The brown eyes flashed a welcome assent. He

dropped his gun and hunting bag, and bending over began to break the tough burr with the heel of his boot.

Elizabeth noticed his hands were soft and smooth, unlike those of a laborer. "Do you live about here?" she asked.

"Only part of the time," he replied.

Elizabeth could not overcome her curiosity. She again asked, "Are you a hired man for some of the farmers?"

"I am hired into service, hard work, for a lifetime, perhaps."

She held out her hand for the chestnuts which he rolled into it. In so doing, his hand touched hers. She raised her eyes instantly and gazed into his. The soft brown eyes met the steel gray ones, a look was exchanged which never could be forgotten. "Thank you, sir," she murmured.

The man picked up his hat which lay in the leaves, shouldered his gun, whistled to the dog, and passed on. Elizabeth looked after him with strained, wondering eyes. "My knight," she acknowledged. "From whence came he and whither doth he go?"

He soon vanished from her sight, the hanging boughs and thick undergrowth screening him entirely from her view.

"Yes," she said, "it's the very same khaki suit,

a cap taking the place of the old panama hat." She slowly wended her way back with a kind of dazed feeling that something unusual had happened. She hardly realized where she was until the clear voice of James Sterling sounded in the still air. Then she shook herself and tried to feel natural.

"You were gone so long," he said, "that I was impatient to see you again and was about to start to find you." His handsome face beamed on her kindly as he took her hand to help her to her place in the car. Then a trifle anxiously, "But you look pale. Did you fall or did anything unpleasant happen?"

Elizabeth realized that she must stop dreaming and come back to the present and Mr. James Sterling.

"Nothing serious," she remonstrated. "A man with a gun came out from the thicket very suddenly. It startled me for a moment. To meet any one with a gun always does. I'm afraid that they will shoot me instead of a pheasant."

"He might well mistake you for a bird of bright plumage. But," he said anxiously, "I want again to see the roses in your cheeks, for when you ran into the woods they rivaled the foliage."

"I have so much color ordinarily that it seems refreshing to lose it once in a while," said Eliza-

beth. She soon recovered her poise and the conversation again became part of the harmonious day. She drove her car at a rapid pace, slowing up at a fork in the road.

Mr. Sterling said, "Take the left and we will soon pass the Maple Tree farm and we will climb that hill together. Oh," he murmured, "if we could only climb the hills of life together."

They had followed the country roads up hills and down grades and there was not time to express his wishes. As they rounded a corner leading from a placid lake, a man who had been crossing the fields by a short cut climbed the vine covered rail fence which bordered the highway.

"That is the man," whispered Elizabeth.

Roses grew in her cheeks again as she slowed up to turn a sharp curve and they were face to face with the hunter. He evidently recognized Elizabeth at once and lifted his cap, passing close to the car as the road was very narrow.

"A fine looking fellow. I wonder if he shot any game?" inquired James.

"Does he look like a hired man, such as the farmers employ?" asked Elizabeth.

"Oh, no, indeed; he looks like a summer visitor. He must be a student," answered James.

Soon the car was descending the steep hill which Elizabeth remembered so well. There was

the large old-fashioned home and widespreading maple tree with its leaves just turning.

"This is the Maysfield Farm," James informed Elizabeth. "It is one of the finest old residences anywhere in this section of the country."

At the foot of the hill they turned around and began the ascent. The Dodge did it easily and she rejoiced that her car succeeded where others failed. As the car rounded the last bend of the hill Elizabeth glanced back and saw the man with the gun standing by the garden gate. "Surely," she thought, "he must be the hired man. James had just said the Maysfields had no children. Of course he is, and I must forget my knight."

On the way home, Mr. Sterling proposed that they stop at an open space that commanded an unbroken view of the sunset. The sky was aglow with gold-lined waves of brilliant red. "Now," he determined, "I will speak."

"Miss Harding, may I call you Elizabeth for this once? I have for a long time desired to speak to you of a matter of vital importance to me. Will you be my wife? During these happy summer days you have grown into my affections day by day. I can think of nothing that will bring me such great happiness as always being with you. Can you care for me sufficiently to say yes?"

Elizabeth had for some time expected this

declaration from this man, but now it had come. She trembled and hesitated. "Mr. Sterling," she said, "I am greatly flattered that you should wish me to share your heart and home. Perhaps I ought to have told you long ago that I cannot marry any one while my invalid father is living. My duty is to care for him. Mother is not strong and we cannot afford to hire any one to look after him, consequently, my duty is made very plain to me. I shall always hold you in the highest esteem, but as for love, I have never allowed myself to think of that, knowing it would be impossible."

James Sterling looked serious, but said hopefully, "I would gladly take your father and mother to live with us if you feel that you could marry me."

She shook her head, "No, I fear not. My father would not consent to leave his home. I thank you a thousand times," she said. "It greatly pains me to refuse your kind offer, but there is no other honest thing for me to do."

Neither spoke for several minutes. Elizabeth was the first to break the silence as she said, " 'We are not masters of our destinies.' "

"No," he solemnly responded, " 'Rough hew them as we will.' " Then after a pause he added, "At times life's problems seem almost too much for mortal man to bear." Then after another

pause, he added, "The things we most desire are like the choicest fruit which hangs too high for us to reach. If we shake the fruit from the tree, it is bruised and soon will perish."

"Yes," answered Elizabeth, "That is like wrenching one from the path of duty which is made very plain."

"Yes," said the man at her side, "but I take exceptions. Why isn't it our duty to be happy?"

She replied soberly, "Can we ever be truly happy and faithless to our duty? Then our conscience is at stake."

When James Sterling took the hand of Elizabeth in his to say good-bye, he cautiously said, "If time and circumstances change, perhaps then you may be willing to consider me as a suitor for your hand. I will gladly wait any length of time." His appealing look caused Elizabeth to place her other hand on his as she frankly said, "I fear it would not be right to leave it that way. It would be like chasing shadows by day and unreal visions at night. We would both feel we were playing a part in a film of no certain purpose. No," she continued, regretfully, "no, we must resume our old footing on the plane of friendship. Besides I belong to the unchangeable Gale family. You have known Aunt Martha so well, I presume you understand what I mean."

James Sterling hesitated a moment, then bending over he imprinted a kiss on the small hand that lay on his own. There was a strange unsteadiness in his voice as he said good-bye. "God bless you, Miss Harding," and he turned quickly down Miss Gale's driveway.

Elizabeth watched him until he was nearly out of sight before going into the house. At the supper table, Aunt Martha insinuated, "You must have had a charming ride. The afterglow of the sunset was perfect."

"Yes, aunty," replied her niece, "it was lovely everywhere."

"Mr. Sterling enjoyed it, did he not?" interrogated Mrs. Harding.

"No one could help enjoying a day like this," replied her daughter.

"You don't seem very enthusiastic over it," ejaculated her mother as she looked keenly at her daughter. "Perhaps you are tired."

"Yes, somewhat," replied Elizabeth. "I attempted to show off my ability as an accomplished chauffeur."

After some more questions by Miss Gale about what direction they took and the condition of the roads the subject dropped.

In the seclusion of her room that night Elizabeth unbound her hair which fell below her waist

in rippling waves of gold. She slipped on a negligee of the softest silk and turning off the electric light, knelt before the open window, and resting her head upon her hands stared out into the October night. It was starlight and a new moon crept slowly over the towering tree tops. She went minutely over each event of the afternoon. How quickly one climax had followed another, and, yet, in one way, it was the longest afternoon she had ever experienced. The events were indelibly imprinted upon her mind and never could be erased.

"Mr. Sterling will live to see the day that he will thank me for this decision. Perfect love must be the basis of a happy life. If I cannot love a man like that I must be destined, like Aunt Martha, for a single life." She sighed for she knew that buried deeply in memory's casket was the face of her vanishing knight and the steady gray eyes that with one swift glance searched her very soul. "What if he really is a knight and not at menial service? I wonder who he is? Would it be unwomanly in me to make an effort to find out?" She pulled a small rocker to the window and sat thinking. The brown eyes were pensive. A new chapter in her young life had been written and finished. Would there be no sequel; no aftermath when summer came again? The chorus of night voices were an accompaniment to her

thoughts. The croaking of the frogs and the round tones of the whippoorwill chimed with the soft tones of her bedroom clock as it struck twelve. She rose from her reverie and hastily retired.

CHAPTER XIX

WHEN Ernest Maysfield came so unexpectedly on the girl who had furnished the romance for many day dreams, he thought at first it could not be she, but as he drew nearer and saw her bending over the chestnut burrs he instantly recalled the first glimpse he had of her on that hot July afternoon bending over the gasoline tank of her car. He stood transfixed for a few seconds before approaching her. This, then, was the girl who had so completely occupied his thoughts that he had gone over to Sefton to inquire about her. He recalled it all, especially the information that Sartor Resartus Jenkins, the old gardener, had so unwittingly given to him, and his extreme volubility regarding the engagement of Miss Elizabeth to Mr. Sterling. His first impulse was to turn back and leave her unaware of his presence, but temptation overcame his scruples. He must look into those beautiful brown eyes once more, even though they left him spellbound. Then he would do penance for his weakness and go on his way as became the dignity of a stranger. She evidently did not remember him. Besides she belonged to another man. This last thought created a temporary stoicism in his

behavior, which enabled him to indulge himself with a speaking glance into her sparkling eyes. The touch of her hand also warned him to pass on and not look back. A swift glance through the cloistered thicket revealed a man in white flannels standing by the car. He knew this to be Mr. Sterling, her lover. He then realized that the sun had shone on him for only a brief moment. The clouds quickly followed, overshadowing this part of his life which was as yet unsatisfied. He reviewed his late unhappy experience with Evelyn Durand and realized that his fondness for her was only a boyish romance, which with temperaments so unlike could never ripen into true love. His attempts to revive the past had only pity for her that led him to seek her society to win and help her, if possible, to renounce the shallow life she was leading. Mildred had informed her brother of the bitter feeling Evelyn entertained for him. He was sorry for that and it was this feeling that induced him to call on her again, but she refused to see him. Later the report was current that she had gone to New York to study for the stage.

Ernest felt that now there was nothing left for him to do in that respect and the meeting with Elizabeth Harding caused him to plunge into his studies at the Seminary with new zeal.

"I may give it my best work, if I give it my

undivided attention. If I am destined for single life," he thought, "it will give me more time in which to help others."

He was spending the week-end at Uncle John's and often went hunting for recreation. The day of his encounter with Elizabeth Harding his manner was noticeably serious. As he entered the house Uncle John's cheerful voice greeted him. "Come in, Erny. You are a little late, aren't you, or," continued Uncle John, "we are taking our supper a trifle earlier. You see the days are getting shorter and the chores are done earlier. The work is getting less and when we are not busy we are always ready for our meals. Wash your hands at the kitchen sink, Erny, and don't stop to change because," he added obsequiously, "your Aunt Leddy likes us to be prompt at our meals you know."

Aunt Leddy slightly elevated her eyebrows and cast a glance across the table which, if interpreted correctly, would explain that her husband was the one quite ready to begin his supper. When his nephew was seated, Uncle John shot a series of questions across the table.

"What kind of luck at hunting? Fisherman's luck, I warrant."

"Not very good," said Ernest. "Some way I

felt as weak as a woman about the killing of innocent birds."

John looked surprisingly at his nephew as he said, "Perhaps the day wasn't enervating, did not furnish much pep to do anything. Have another chop, my son, and another helping of string beans. Some your Aunt Leddy put up last year. They're just as good as they were when first picked."

Aunt Leddy who observed that her nephew did not show the usual keen relish for his supper, said kindly, "You must be tired, Erny. You have probably walked some distance."

"Yes, I did," quietly replied Ernest.

Uncle John, with appetite unabated, was doing justice to his third lamb chop. He exclaimed, "When the strawberry short cake comes in, Erny will make up. He knows what your strawberry short cakes are, Maw," with a glance at his wife. "They are first quality in every respect. To be sure, they are canned berries, but mighty fine." And his praise was followed by a smack of his lips. "Perhaps," he roguishly added, "Erny caught a glimpse of the dessert and is saving for that." Uncle John's laugh was always like a tonic and his nephew joined in the laugh while Aunt Leddy smiled sweetly.

You never quite knew what tack Uncle John

would take next so when he broke out with, "Have you found a girl yet?" he looked straight at his nephew and Aunt Leddy gave a little start of surprise.

Ernest returned his uncle's gaze and said, "Not yet, uncle. They all go back on me."

"Let me give you a word of warning," said Uncle John as he pointed his forefinger at his nephew, "don't ever select one of those city girls that try to improve on the work of the Creator by painting their faces until they look like blushing images, or the dummies in shop windows. Avoid also the girls that are a poor imitation of men. A natural woman cannot be improved upon."

Uncle John's eyes sought Aunt Lydia's and lingered lovingly there.

Ernest took the opportunity to say, with a half-smile, "I think you had better select one for me, Uncle John."

"No, no, no, by no means," replied John. "I always felt capable of making my own choice, otherwise, I should not have been competent to have a wife." He paused, leaned back in his chair, and continued, "I believe in love at first sight. Now, the first time I saw your Aunt Leddy I vowed she would be my wife. But," he regretfully added, "we wasted so much precious time by

waiting. Don't you wait too long, my son, for when you start preaching you ought to make your home. You know a single man is an object of too much of the solicitude of kind friends, helpful widows and maidens of the whole and fancy free type."

"Well, John," interposed Aunt Lydia, "I think you have given enough advice on that subject for the present."

"Perhaps so," cheerfully assented her husband as they left the table.

Uncle John, with his plump, red hand, patted Ernest on the shoulder with the remark, "As regards the girl, Erny, perhaps you'd better try the auto-suggestion system by saying forty times a day, 'Here she comes; here she comes,'" and Uncle John burst into a gale of laughter. "It seems to me," he suggested, as he drew his nephew down to a seat by his side on the chintz covered davenport, "that when you break down that thought system, you can only get the things you long for, recovery from illness and such like. But, I maintain, that if the whole town repeated one by one that Ichabod Frank was not a dern fool he still would be one."

Uncle John brought both hands down on his knees with a heavy slap while his bulky frame shook with laughter. Aunt Lydia looked reprov-

ingly at her husband as she said, "You ought not to speak unkindly of your neighbor."

The evening passed pleasantly and just before retiring John Maysfield brought out the family Bible and placing it in the hands of his nephew said thoughtfully, "This book occupies a conspicuous place on my parlor table. I want those who are not unfamiliar with the book to ask about it. That is one thing with me that will never go out of fashion. Erny, you read to us the fourteenth chapter of St. John, and we shall all sleep better to-night."

CHAPTER XX

SUMMER had come and gone since James Sterling had learned his fate from Elizabeth Harding's lips. She did not visit Aunt Martha this summer, as her mother's health was failing and it took all of her time to look after her father and mother. Miss Gale had visited them in their Vermont home. She brought tidings of James Sterling. He was the same polite gentleman and kind friend to her. Elizabeth may have blushed a little under the querulous gaze of her aunt, but she said nothing.

The months that had intervened had softened the sharpness of disappointed hopes for him. He wondered at times why he had not felt like one refusing to be comforted. He had built the image of Elizabeth in every inch of the scheme which was to hold his happiness. She had been woven and interwoven in all his plans and now, it was like shattering a costly vase or removing a picture that he had looked upon so long with satisfaction, leaving a blank and colorless wall in its place. As time went on he was inclined to question his heart. Was it a deep true love he felt for Elizabeth Harding or was she like a beautiful picture he had selected to adorn his home? He accepted

her reasons, the words she uttered were true. He wondered how he took her refusal so resignedly. If he had loved her as he ought, wouldn't there be a bitter struggle to give her up? He was something of a fatalist and grew to think it was for the best. "I surely am not an ardent lover. I could not have dropped on my knees and begged her to reconsider her answer."

James Sterling could not have acted the part of a supplicant. Love must be voluntarily given or not at all. He knew now that he had always desired a home of his own, with wife and children about. Circumstances had compelled him to hold a tight rein on these natural desires, but the time had come for this kind of happiness. He was conscious of an unknown depth of affection, long smothered, and crying for escape. The summer had gone and his cherished hope had eluded his grasp. One of his classics from childhood had been, if first efforts fail, try, try again. He knew he would try again, leaving the problem of failure unsolved. He was governed in all things by that rule and not by self-adjustment. He was not emotional but he was strong in failure and happy in success. His love would be the steady light, never flickering or going out. His character and morals were not of the shabby kind, showing no frayed edges like old linen. He knew there would

be no petty deception lurking behind domestic scenes, that promises made at the altar would abide with him forever. He remembered in the solitude of his reflections, how his good mother would never say definitely, "Yes or no," but, "If it is for the best, James, you may do it." His policy had never been to put aside any things that obstructed his plans, for they might be secret agencies for good. A discipline of his early training, he had no desires to plunge into any excesses for pleasurable excitements.

He took up his office duties with renewed zeal, took more time to consider the needs and advancement of them in the employ of the bank. New things sprang up to call for helpful attention. One of the most important was the engagement of his niece Ruth. She had been traveling abroad with friends during the summer and now prepared for a season of social affairs in which Uncle James must be interested too.

Then, James Sterling was nominated for State Senator. Ordinarily he would not have cared to accept this office for public service, but now it seemed a relief to change conditions for a while. The result was that he was a most popular man with his constituents, both in the house and senate.

Spring found him with the same distinguished poise he had always borne. When autumn came

the episode of the previous fall left much the same impression that one feels when summer goes. Elizabeth Harding had not visited Sefton. Her father's health was failing and in turn Miss Gale visited them during the summer months. During the winter, Mr. Sterling chaperoned his niece to Palm Beach, spending six weeks in the south and in the following June Ruth was married, and James Sterling soon acknowledged he was truly lonely. He took up golf for exercise and spent the month of August at Bar Harbor. His niece and husband had crossed the continent for their wedding trip and were still in California. Mr. Harding had passed away in July, but, her mother being somewhat feeble, Elizabeth did not come to Sefton. "Perhaps when summer goes she will come," thought James Sterling, as he paced the piazza of his hotel one moonlight night. "But what of that? The Gales are unchangeable."

After his return early in September, he admitted that it was a lonely kind of place at home. A letter from Ruth stated that she and Dick were to remain in Los Angeles for the winter, but she hoped Uncle James would not mind. Of course not. He tried to be honest with himself, but the evenings dragged into the long winter. Sickness prevailed, even Miss Gale was down with a nurse to look after her. The genial warmth of December

changed to a severe cold in January. Storm after storm came in great succession, followed by a raging blizzard, in the middle of the month. Huge drifts hampered traffic, even the doctors were obliged to wear soldier's hip boots. Several of the officers at the bank had succumbed to influenza. Its president, strong in body and mind, had no fear but worked early and late to relieve the others.

One day he had worked unusually late and as he left the bank the sun was setting rapidly. He buttoned his coat tighter about his throat and fought his way home. He felt chilly and the housekeeper brought hot water and soda. He warmed his slippers before the bright wood fire. His head ached and he felt hot and cold in turns. Mrs. Pipper suggested that she call a doctor when he left his food untasted at dinner time.

"Perhaps you'd better," he assented, "for I need something to break this up as I can't be spared at the bank just now."

Dr. Strait was summoned, the old-time doctor. After a brief examination, he pronounced it a case of influenza which must be treated at once.

"You must go right to bed. Keep him covered and give him plenty of hot drink. We must induce perspiration," adding, "He will need a nurse, Mrs. Pipper. You surely could not take

care of him. I will ask Dr. Whitman, of Glenford, to send a competent nurse by the first train. I will call the first thing in the morning."

The morning found Mr. Sterling in a raging fever. The strong man tossed and rolled upon his bed, his lips parched and his eyes lurid with fever heat. Dr. Strait looked anxious. "That train," he said, "will be due in twenty minutes. I will go myself and meet the nurse. There is so much sickness that nurses are scarce. The doctor is sending one not yet graduated, but he says she is all right. Would try her with any case, notwithstanding her youth and inexperience."

Mrs. Pipper took off her spectacles and looked doubtful. The word youth had troubled her. "I hope," she said as she watched the tall gaunt form of the doctor as he strode along in the deep snow, "I hope it won't be some young foolish girl. We need a steady woman with experience, too."

At the station, Dr. Whitman alighted with a small figure in a fur coat by his side. "Good morning, Dr. Strait. Let me introduce Miss Maysfield. She is coming to look after your patient."

"Glad to see you, Miss Maysfield," said the doctor. "Mr. Sterling is an important man here—president of the Colonial Bank and Trust Company."

"Take good care of him, Miss Maysfield," called back Dr. Whitman. "I have a case here at Sefton. Must hurry on."

"I wish," said Dr. Strait, "that you would come with us and take a look at Mr. Sterling. I desire it very much."

Dr. Whitman, after looking at his watch, complied, and they were soon in the presence of the sick man. After an examination, Dr. Whitman diagnosed the case as a severe attack of influenza. "But," he added, "he has a fine constitution. His system is not hampered by the things that prevent the results of medicine. A man that smokes incessantly or a steady drinker I dread to treat."

Mildred looked at him earnestly as she placed her cool hand on his burning forehead and with the other took his hot dry hand in hers. He turned towards her moaning, "I must die; I shall die."

"This will make you better," she said cheerfully, holding a spoonful of medicine to his lips. He reluctantly opened his parched lips and took the cooling draught, that followed the medicine. A strain of pity surged over Mildred as she saw the suffering that her patient was fighting against so strongly, an enemy seeking to claim him. She was constantly at his side, striving in every possible way to alleviate his suffering. Not until the

next day did she take any rest or sleep. Dr. Strait, after examining his patient for the second time that day, said encouragingly that his temperature was lower and he would probably sleep from sheer exhaustion.

"Now is your time for rest. Steal away and Mrs. Pipper can watch him. He will probably sleep. If you will be with him to note the change at midnight I shall be better satisfied."

As the doctor predicted, the sick man sank into profound sleep. This state was refreshing to Mildred after watching for so many hours his incessant restlessness. She tucked the covers as tenderly around his shoulders as a mother could for her child, and leaving the room very quietly prepared for several hours of rest.

"Do not let me sleep later than eleven o'clock," she earnestly told Mrs. Pipper who had found a place at the extreme end of the room so as to be as far away from the patient as possible. She quieted her conscience by saying, "Mr. Sterling probably will sleep," and she shrugged her shoulders, adding, "I don't care to get the influenza."

Mildred woke with a start as the chimes of the clock struck a quarter of eleven. She hurriedly dressed. As she entered the sick room, she saw, in the dim light that Mrs. Pipper was sound

asleep in a reclining chair just outside the door. All was quiet; no sounds came from the occupant of the bed. She roused Mrs. Pipper from her slumber, advising her to seek her bed, otherwise she might get cold. Assuring herself that Mr. Sterling was still sleeping she went down to the kitchen and prepared a light refreshment for him as well as herself. Returning she sat down by a small table near the fireplace and drank a cup of malted milk and ate a sandwich. At ten minutes of twelve she stationed herself by his bedside as the doctor had requested her to watch closely the change at midnight. Precisely at twelve o'clock the sick man moved slightly, turning on his back. He raised his right hand to his face, slowly rubbed his eyes, opened them, and looked about him. His eyes rested on the slight girlish figure at his side.

Then in a feeble voice he said, "I thought I was in heaven and could not open my eyes, but a beautiful angel came and opened them for me. Are you the angel?"

"Hardly that," smilingly replied Mildred. "I know I am quite earthy."

His eyes closed for a moment. Then opening them wide with a long lingering gaze into her pleasant face he asked, "Am I so ill?"

She shook her head quietly saying, "Yes, you have been ill, but you are getting better."

He rubbed his eyes again and after a swift glance around the room turned his head toward Mildred, and said, "Are you my nurse?"

"Yes, Mr. Sterling, I am doing that part to help you get well, but now you must not talk any more. It is time for your medicine," and she gave him the broth she had prepared and then the awful medicine.

"Thank you," she said, "for taking it so obediently. I will take your temperature and then perhaps you will sleep a little more. Sleep is nature's sweet restorer and you must make up for lost time. I will cover you closely, as the night is cool."

She placed his arm beneath the blanket and left the room, soon returning with a hot water bag which she placed at his feet. Then drawing her chair to the fireplace she prepared her report for the doctor next morning.

James Sterling slept until the sun had made its way up the eastern hills and peeped through the cracks of the shutters. He was weak and exhausted and felt like a strong man that had run a race. He had won but was left bereft of strength. Mildred was quickly by his side.

"Good morning," he said. "Isn't it morning?" he questioned.

"Yes, it's morning," returned Mildred. "Did your sleep refresh you?" she kindly asked.

"I think I am better, thank you," he said cautiously.

Mildred drew the shades partly up that the sunshine might come in unobstructed. She bathed his face and hands and gave him a wash for his mouth. After these ministrations, she brought him some broth and weak tea. He watched her in wonder and silence as she flitted about the room.

Dr. Strait made his usual morning call. As he looked at the sick man he said, "I can see at a glance, Mr. Sterling, that you are much improved since my last visit. Now it remains for you to complete the cure by following minutely the advice of your nurse. She will do her part and it is left for you to assist her. It takes but little time to get down, but," he significantly added, "a longer time to get up."

"I see, doctor, that you mean to keep me here for some time," replied the patient.

"Oh, not exactly that," evasively answered the doctor. "You are to simply follow your nurse's directions and be patient."

The next day, James Sterling showed signs of marked improvement. "May I sit up?" he

eagerly inquired of Mildred after the morning's greeting.

"Not until to-morrow," she quickly answered.

"It's rather wearysome lying here," he discontentedly remarked.

"Yes, I suppose so," admitted Mildred, "but it is better to rest now than a much longer time later"—

"But," interrupted the sick man, "wouldn't it be well to try my strength a little?"

"Not yet," she said and her decisive tone seemed to pacify him for the present.

The next day after consulting the doctor, Mildred replied to his question as to sitting up that two days longer must intervene.

"But," he said disappointedly, "you told me yesterday that I might sit up to-day."

"Yes, I know," demurely replied Mildred, "but you see that I was not the rightful authority after all. Dr. Strait would not permit my well meant plans to be carried out. I hope you will not lay it up against me," said Mildred.

"By no means," he quickly responded, "but tell me what I may call you. We have never been properly introduced."

"My name is Mildred," she laughingly exclaimed. "My family call me Milly, but my less

familiar friends pronounce Mildred with dignity."

James Sterling's eyes flashed a responsive call to dignity. "That is my strong point," he said. Several days later he sat propped up in bed. Mildred tucked the snowy pillows about him. His face was pale. An occasional glow of satisfaction crossed his features when his dainty little nurse hovered about him.

"I have been thinking," he said, "that you might call me Jim. You see I am Mr. Sterling to almost every one. Please call me Jim," he persuasively urged.

Mildred blushed scarlet at this sudden request. "I fear that it would not sound quite dignified for your nurse to speak so familiarly."

"No one will hear it but myself. Why not indulge me?" he gently asked.

"You see I might make a slip when Mrs. Pipper or the doctor were present," said Mildred as she stood at the foot of the bed, her hands clasped around the mahogany bed post on which her cheek rested. Her eyes were playful as she met his serene gaze. "I must away and prepare your food. I can see symptoms of returning appetite."

"The food you prepare would tempt any man's appetite, but do not be away long for I like to talk with you," he said.

Each day brought fresh strength, and his fine features were returning to their former handsome bearing. James Sterling was convalescing rapidly and the new experience of intimate association with Mildred brought a sense of relief and happiness to him. Whenever she administered medicine or bathed his face, a strong impulse came over him to seize the pretty hands and kiss them. He watched her with ever increasing interest as she went about performing the daily necessities for his comfort. When she was absent for rest or a little exercise out of doors, the time hung heavily on his hands and he missed her. He liked to call her Mildred, and again begged that she address him as Jim. "It will help me to get well was his latest appeal." He held her hand, saying, "You will not refuse a sick man such a simple request."

Mildred bit her thin lips, then smilingly said, "Jim, it's time you took your nap. I will drop the shades."

"Please don't," he said. "I want to look at you."

"But, Mr. Sterling. I mean, Jim, you must obey your nurse," and she pulled away.

CHAPTER XXI

MRS. PIPPER sat in a small wicker chair at the sitting room window which commanded a wide view of the street. She was busily knitting on a gray woolen sock for Mr. Sterling to wear on cold days. Her eyes frequently left her work to follow the long line of elm trees arching over the wide street, a gothic structure of nature's building. Mrs. Pipper rocked to and fro, engaged in profound meditation. Things in her master's household were not going exactly agreeable to her. Her speculations ran thus, "It's high time Miss Maysfield goes. Mr. Sterling is normally well, and I believe he would be at the bank this minute if that girl was gone. He certainly does not need her any longer. I can wait on him, at odd times, just as well. I think I will tell him." So absorbing were these reflections that Mrs. Pipper's eyes did not see a tall stout woman entering the path that led to the side hall door. The second gentle tap on the brass knocker roused her, and opening the door she ushered in Miss Harriet Dearborn with the surprised exclamation, "Good afternoon, Harriet. You stole a march on me this time. I sat right by the window and did not see you com-

ing. Sit right down in the morris chair. It must be slippery walking."

"You bet it is," replied the visitor, and after several long drawn respirations, she sank into the chair designated with a heavy thump. "I thought I would drop around and inquire how Mr. Sterling is getting on. Mrs. Straw's daughter, Esther, told me that she saw him out walking with his nurse. They were talking and laughing like chums. She was wondering, like Miss Bates, the dressmaker, whether or not something serious might come from it. You don't feel there is anything to worry about, do you?" asked Miss Dearborn.

"Mercy sakes no!" indignantly protested the housekeeper. "Nothing doing." She rose, and dropping her knitting in the chair, said, "I am going to get you a cup of tea, Harriet."

Harriet was the leading gossip in Sefton, and Mrs. Pipper, always eager for news, knew that a good cup of tea would strengthen her visitor's tongue to repeat the latest town gossip. She endeavored to change the subject, as she did not care to discuss the personal affairs of her master with Harriet, who would repeat from door to door anything she could get hold of. Mrs. Pipper with as studiously unconscious a manner as pos-

sible set the tea table, and bringing the tea, sat down beside her visitor.

"The snow is going fast," pursued the hostess.

Miss Dearborn ignoring this subject of the weather proceeded with the subject she had at first introduced.

"You appear to be mighty indifferent. It seems to me that a change of this kind would affect you most of all," said Harriet.

Mrs. Pipper explained that Dr. Strait had advised Miss Maysfield to remain, fearing that Mr. Sterling would be imprudent and have some kind of a relapse.

"What can she find to do for him now?" interposed Miss Dearborn. "He dresses himself and walks out. I think she must be queer to think of staying under present circumstances."

"Mr. Sterling cannot use his eyes much," said Mrs. Pipper, "and the nurse has to read to him."

"I think you are rather blind, Mrs. Pipper. You had better open your eyes before it is too late. Them trained nurses are schemers. They know just how to please their patients, and in their weakness get them easily in their toils."

"Have another cup of tea," urged Mrs. Pipper. "It's orange pekoe. Best flavor we ever had."

As Mrs. Pipper was filling the cup, Harriet

said, "Two lumps of sugar, the first cup was not sweet enough."

"Take another of these anise cookies," said Mrs. Pipper as she held the plate before her. "Mr. Sterling is very fond of my cookies. He likes them better than any you can buy. It's an old-fashioned recipe of my mother's," added Mrs. Pipper.

Harriet Dearborn was far from satisfied with the scanty information she had gleaned from Mrs. Pipper. She broke out afresh, saying, "Not long ago everyone said that Mr. Sterling was going to marry Miss Martha Gale's niece. They say she is very beautiful."

At this point, Harriet leaned forward, and gesticulating with her left hand, said, "My opinion is that if Mr. Sterling would not take Miss Gale's pretty niece this small undersized nurse stands no chance." Miss Dearborn was tall and massively built, her weight bordering on two hundred pounds, and her height nearly six feet.

After expressing her views in a somewhat defiant manner regarding Mr. Sterling's matrimonial intentions, she rose to her feet. "I must be going. I want to stop in at Mrs. Wales. They say she is heir to some money that her brother left. He has just died in California. Besides, I promised to take Arabelle Morton's mail to her.

She gets the greatest lot of post cards. It takes all my time going down there to read them, but they are all about the same."

Miss Dearborn buttoned her spacious coat and drew on her brown mittens. She stopped at the door to throw back a last word of warning, "Keep your eyes wide open," she said, and there was a suspicion of maliciousness in her voice as she bade Mrs. Pipper good-bye.

"Come again, Harriet," said Mrs. Pipper, and slowly closed the door. Mrs. Pipper cleared away the tea things in a very absent-minded manner. Suddenly, while thus engaged, she heard the front door close, and it caused her to step to the window, screened by the side curtains. She beheld Mildred Maysfield evidently on her way to the post office.

"Now is my chance," she thought. "I will see Mr. Sterling and express my views on the subject."

She hurried upstairs to his room, and not finding him there, she descended to the large hall and living room below. Mr. Sterling was walking back and forth. He stopped as the housekeeper presented herself before him.

"You are in, Mr. Sterling," ventured Mrs. Pipper.

"Yes, Mrs. Pipper, the day is damp, and Miss

Maysfield advised me to remain inside. She has gone to do some errands for me. You see, "he pleasantly admitted, "I really need a private secretary."

Mrs. Pipper evidently did not agree with him in this startling admission, but stood silently before him nervously running her forefinger inside the loose belt of her immaculate white apron.

He, observing something unusual in her manner, said, "I hope you are quite well, Mrs. Pipper."

"Yes, thank you," nervously replied the housekeeper, "and I am very glad to see you up. You are about as well as ever, aren't you?"

"Yes," he replied, "quite normal. I feel like a new man. I shall take up my business very soon, I trust."

"I—I—I—wanted to say," stuttered Mrs. Pipper, "that you are nearly your old self, and that it would not be necessary to retain the services of Miss Maysfield any longer. I am sure I could wait on you at this time. There is no housecleaning or fruit to look after. It would be a great pleasure, sir, to do this for you. The expense of a regular trained nurse is no small sum. Besides," she continued, "Miss Maysfield tells me she has not finished her training at the hospital and only came here as an emergency nurse. I am

sure she must want to get back to town. I have lived here so long, so many years, sir, and am always looking out for your best interests, sir." She finished eloquently she thought, and waited respectfully for her master to speak.

He entertained for Mrs. Pipper the high regard which kindness and long service demands. "Thank you, Mrs. Pipper, I am sincerely grateful to you for your faithfulness and interest in my behalf. For that reason I certainly would not impose an additional burden upon you. I shall soon be able to resume my old habits, especially the one of waiting on myself. As for Miss Maysfield, she had rather a hard time looking after me, and in justice to her, I wish her to remain here and get rested."

He was not blind to the crestfallen manner in which she listened to his argument. Bidding him good evening, she left the room. "It may be that Miss Dearborn is right," she soliloquized, "but there is another way in which I may honestly interrupt the plans of that nurse." She weighed the matter carefully, and after a somewhat sleepless night, she met Miss Maysfield at the breakfast table. Mr. Sterling was still taking his breakfast in his room.

"This is a fine morning, the fog seems to have vanished," remarked Mrs. Pipper.

"Yes," answered Mildred. "I am glad, for the damp air is not so good for our patient."

"He really seems very much like his old self," said Mrs. Pipper. "I conversed with him yesterday, and he expects to take up his duties at the bank very soon. He is a very busy man," proudly ejaculated the housekeeper.

"Yes, I suppose so," assented Mildred.

"I presume from what Mr. Sterling said that you will not stay with us much longer, as he will not need you." Mildred flushed slightly at the frankness of Mrs. Pipper. "Of course, I have ample time to wait on him now," asserted the housekeeper.

Mildred remained silent, and seemingly gave her complete attention to the roll she was eating, while the housekeeper, not feeling quite sure of the part she was playing, adroitly changed the subject. "Don't you think this is a well arranged house, Miss Maysfield?"

"Yes, I do," replied Mildred with perfect composure.

"Two years ago," remarked Mrs. Pipper, "it seemed very likely that a new mistress would preside over the place."

A keen observer might have seen that Mildred gave a little start at this announcement.

"Yes," said the housekeeper, "she is a niece of

Miss Gale, one of the wealthiest ladies in the country. But some way," she added, "it did not come about. It was rumored that her father being an invalid she would not leave him. Her father passed away last summer, but she has not visited her aunt since his death."

Mildred finished her coffee hurriedly and said, "I must go or my patient will be calling for his breakfast." She left the room, pausing for several minutes to adjust her thoughts, for a sudden shock had fallen upon her. There was something within her struggling for liberty. Must it remain forever in obscurity? She was aware now that James Sterling had awakened emotions in her heart never known before. Her pride must help her now to bury and not to foster this new birth of feeling. "It is altogether wrong, for James Sterling belongs to another. He can never be my Jim, no never. I must go now, she kept repeating. It is my duty to go." She roused herself, and entering the patient's room gave him the same sweet smile as she returned his good morning. His eyes shone with happiness as they rested on her placid face. He thought she looked a little paler than usual. Mildred's complexion was of that opaque coloring, with sometimes a flush of delicate pink such as no painter's brush can ever perfectly imitate. Her hair was dark, almost

black, and contrasted strikingly with the pale skin and mild blue eyes. Her features were quite regular. Her slender throat sat gracefully on shapely shoulders. She was of medium height, with a slender but finely moulded figure, and she carried herself with the stateliness of the true patrician. James Sterling studied these charms daily, deciding that there was no room for improvement either in the face or the character of his little nurse.

After his breakfast they were sitting in the bright sun parlor opening from the large living room. Mildred had brought in the morning paper, but before reading it asked, "When are you going to dismiss me, Mr. Sterling?"

He looked reprovingly at her, and placing his hands over his ears waited. "Oh," she laughingly interposed, "when we are talking business, I must drop the Jim."

"But why, what makes you ask such a hideous question?" he asked.

"Dr. Strait does not come any more. I have been here a week since his visits ceased, and it must be up to me to relieve you of my unnecessary presence," said Mildred.

James Sterling turned pale and looked troubled, "But how can I get along?" he asked.

"Just as you did without me," she quickly said.

Her pretty chin rose slightly higher, bringing into the front the swanlike throat. "Tell me," she pleaded, "that you are willing to let me go on Saturday next. That means," she added, "that I must write some letters. I will leave you to practice reading the morning paper. Call if you need me."

Mildred left the room. James Sterling looked after her, then dropped his paper and sat like one dumb. So great had been his happiness with this lovely girl that he had not allowed himself to think of ever parting from her. Mildred's sudden request shook him from head to foot. His frame fairly trembled. "I cannot part with her," he thought. "Life will never be the same without her." The sudden prospects of losing her brought out the truth. "I love her, I love her as no man ever loved. She must stay. Mildred, Mildred," he cried, "you must marry me."

At eleven o'clock James Sterling grew very restless as his Mildred did not return. He summoned the housekeeper, who said that Miss Maysfield had gone out to mail some letters, but would be back soon. "Can I do anything for you?" asked Mrs. Pipper.

"No, I thank you," rather sharply replied her master.

At twelve o'clock the telephone rang. James

rushed to answer it. It was Mildred. She said, "I received a letter calling me to town to sign some business papers. There is no time to come to the house for I must take this train. Please forgive me for the abrupt action on my part. I will return to-morrow, and it will give you a chance to try doing things for yourself. Be good or I shall lecture you when we meet to-morrow."

"I am sorry," answered James, "but please come back early to-morrow and wire me to-night just what to do with myself." There was no reply to his request, as Mildred had hung up the receiver. James Sterling passed a most uncomfortable twenty-four hours. He tried various resources in his endeavor to kill the time. He paced the floor. He took up one paper after another, only to throw them quickly down. He stared from the window, hoping in vain that she might return on the evening train. If I were sure I could bear the journey I would go to town and bring her back. He ate very little for his supper, much to the discomfort of Mrs. Pipper. He played solitaire and was very late in retiring. His face looked haggard. He was glad it did, for it might convey to Mildred how much he had missed her. He slept but little the first part of the night, but caught a fleeting nap in the early morning. When Mildred returned he was sitting quite discon-

solately in his library. The fire that Mrs. Pipper had lighted to cheer up the room had died out and lay in black embers on the open hearth.

When Mildred came in and stood by his side she took his hand, and with hers smoothed the shiny hair back from his temple. He drew her towards him, saying, "Mildred, it is heaven again. We must never part."

She noticed the change in the man, was quick to see the pale and lifeless face. "Yes, my dear, it is true. I love you Mildred. Will you be my wife? Will you be my wife?"

Mildred moved slightly away as she said, "Mr. Sterling, I fear that it is only gratitude for your restoration of health that you feel, besides," she said with a tremulous voice, "I have heard that you love another."

"That is untrue," he said. "But sit by my side darling, and I will relate to you all that has happened. As I have told you, my early life was entirely without interest in girls. I had to plan everything all the way along. It seemed wise for me so to do, and I resolved in order to secure the right position in business that I would give it my sole attention. Business did not keep me, however, from a desire to help suffering humanity. I resolved that when I could secure a home that I would marry, but no earlier than at thirty-five

years of age. Four years ago I reached that age and met a beautiful girl, a niece of Miss Martha Gale of this town. I was constantly with the ladies, and I accompanied them abroad. I admired and respected Miss Harding, but I never loved her. You know beauty does not always bring love. She was more to me like a beautiful painting to hang on the wall to look at. Her aunt favored the plan that she would make a fine Lady Sterling, but it was not to be and this thought never caused me pain or any serious disappointment. She never stirred within me the poetry of love. It was only a summer romance for both of us. Truly, Mildred, I never loved that girl or any other but you. I never told her that I loved her. You see that my life had been a series of formulated plans, originating in the mind, but love springs from the heart. It was left for you to awaken the deeper chords in my nature. Until I met you cupid had only pointed his arrow at me. But now he has sent his swiftest arrow into my heart." He rose to his feet, and tenderly taking Mildred's soft white hands in his, said, pleadingly, "Mildred look into my eyes and believe me. You are the first and only girl that I have ever loved."

She slowly raised her eyes to his, then removing her hands from his close grasp, she threw her

arms around his neck and in a low voice sweetly said, "Jim, I love you."

He took her in his strong arms and kissed her tenderly. "Dearest," he said, "you must stay here and get rested until the weather is such that I can go in my car to see you every day."

"But, Jim," she anxiously interposed, "what about my work at the hospital. I have another year there before I graduate."

"Never mind that," said James. "I never could think of you as nursing anyone but myself. You are mine now, and it will be my greatest joy to care for and comfort you hereafter. When will you marry me?" he asked.

"But, Jim, there is one very important thing that you have forgotten," she said. "My father's permission. I also have a big brother who is like a second father to me."

"I will write your father at once," hastily replied James. "Have you any doubt that he will sanction our happiness?"

"No, Jim, I have not, but I think it is the proper thing to do."

James looked relieved, and then with all the haste of a true lover, he asked, "Will you marry me in June?"

Mildred was thoughtful for an instant, then playfully patting him on the hand, rejoined, "No,

really, Jim, I could never get ready so soon, but," she earnestly added, "when summer goes I will marry you."

CHAPTER XXII

ABNER JONES sat at the breakfast table with a far-away look in his eyes. His wife observed his abstracted manner, also that his food remained on his plate almost untasted. Maria Jane was a seeker after knowledge, especially the kind of information that pertains to everyday events that influenced her narrow life. Her husband's nature was not variable, neither in actions nor in appetite. Thus any change in his attitude caused her to take notice.

It was her custom to expostulate whether his mood was reticent or talkative; either condition tired her nerves. This morning, however, she departed from her usual manner and in almost a coquettish tone, asked, "What are you thinking about, Abe?" Her subdued tones surprised and brought him back to his senses. He buttered the piece of gem he had broken, and keenly looked at his wife. Under his gaze the old spirit of provocation returned, and with more spirit she continued, "Yes, Abner, what's the matter with you anyway?" Abner chewed vigorously at his half-eaten gem and, thinking meanwhile that caution was the better part of domestic peace, said lightly, "Nothing much, why do you ask?"

Maria Jane's patience had reached its limitations, a fiery gleam brightened her faded blue eyes, her recently modulated voice merged into the customary exasperated tone, retorted, "You know, Abner, you are not acting natural. You are hiding something from me."

Her husband knew from past experience that it would not be wise to withhold from his wife the real state of his mind. "Yes, Maria, you are right. There is something on my mind. I did not tell you for fear it would disturb your—your equ—equilibrium."

"Well, what of that?" said his wife.

Abner ignored an exclamation to this last query, and slowly began to unfold the secret of his present thoughtful demeanor. "I had a letter from Jennie yesterday, and she wants us to visit her."

Maria opened her eyes very wide, and with an expression of disgust covering her plain features, said emphatically, "You know as well as I do that we can never leave the chickens, cow and cat. Poor Tommy would starve to death. Besides, your silly sister, Jennie, shows no sense to think for a moment that we could do it."

Abner noted the signs of a coming storm, and said in a conciliatory voice, "You are right, Maria, of course, but we must remember that it is at least ten years since the old Captain went to live with

them. They probably expected that he would cash in before this, but those old sea captains live until they dry up and blow away. Jennie," he added, "must be somewhat discouraged in assisting nature to prolong the old man's life."

"Don't speak in that careless way about old age," said his wife reprovingly. "You may be old yourself some day, and would not care to be hurried into the grave."

"I surely did not mean to insinuate that any of us would wish the Captain's day shortened. I suppose I was thinking of the great care he has been, and still is. My sister will have no cause for regret when he is gone. She has cared for him with the same devotion as if he was her own father."

Maria made no concession to this extolling of her sister-in-law's virtues, and remained silent while Abner continued his argument. "The thing is right here in a nut-shell. Every year Jennie has wanted us to come down to visit. It is quite natural that she should feel that way. Mark must have made a mint of money with his eating house, and, as I said before, it is quite natural that my only sister should wish us to see them so prosperous. To be sure, if God had seen fit to take the old Captain to a more suitable resting place, it would be much easier for Jennie and

Mark to entertain us. But, what's the use! I am convinced that Captain Robb is so thoroughly salted down that he will keep until he is a hundred. We more likely will pass on before he does, because we are nervous and overworked."

Maria made no reply, her hands nervously folding and unfolding the edges of the tablecloth. Abner rose, and laying his hand caressingly on his wife, said, in a more gentle and persuasive voice, "Maria, it is time that you and me took a vacation. Let's go. I'll see that someone will take care of the animals." Maria's face brightened for a few seconds, but soon clouded again. Her husband watched closely the changed manner and in a voice tinged with authority, said, "There's nothing else to think about." "Yes, there is," she quietly responded, "I haven't a decent hat to wear." "Good Lord, your hat is all right. You always had pretty hats. That was your trade, Maria, before we was tied." "That's true, I wish it was now," she said tactlessly.

A shade of something akin to worry crossed Abner's face, and caused his wife to say quickly, "Well, Abner, you know I enjoy trimming my hats much more than cooking. I am sure," she added, "that Jennie will not care to see us, unless we have suitable clothes."

The castdown look that followed her words pro-

duced a sort of relief. Abner replied with animation, "Wait until you get to Boston, where you can see the latest fashions, buy the material and make your hat there, for you will have no cooking to do."

They were invited to come Friday and spend a week, but Mrs. Abner Jones (Maria Jane) decidedly refused to start on that day of the week, feeling sure it would bring bad luck, and Abner's mind was ground in the same channel. Consequently, he wrote his sister they would leave on Saturday. "I hope we will get down there in time for the moving pictures," said Abner. It was decided that Henry Bray would milk the cow and keep the milk, also feed the chickens.

Abner chanced to meet Mr. John Maysfield, who promptly offered to care for Tommy, the cat. "We are troubled with rats in our barn, but if he fails to catch any, we will see that he has sufficient grub."

Tommy was Maria Jane's pet. The one perfect treasure that enhanced her life. She was certain that a sojourn at the Maysfield home would improve him, and no place else would do.

Saturday morning, Mr. and Mrs. Abner Jones were an hour early on their way to the station. It was a walk of about three-quarters of a mile. Abner carried a telescope bag which was his

mother's. Maria's satchel was time-worn, but it contained a large chicken and some apples for the Robb family. She grasped tightly in her left hand a large green cotton umbrella. They moved with reluctant steps, and before reaching the bend in the road that would obscure from their sight the one-story dwelling that was their home, they stopped for several moments, their gaze lingering fondly on the place that had sheltered their bodies, and protected their unseen differences of opinion that so often broke the spell of their happiness. Maria's eyes filled with tears as she looked backward, and Abner's bore a wistful look as his eye caught the poster which he had tacked on his shop door bearing the simple word, "Out," and leaving to the imagination of his customers the length of his stay. The ride on the train was uneventful. Maria sat for the most part with closed eyes. Her husband's efforts to interest her with the outside scenery, or their fellow-passengers, met with no response.

At the station they were met by Mark Robb. He escorted them promptly to a cab. "I don't use my auto in the city. We take our vacation trips in the country," he explained.

"How is Jennie?" asked Maria, in a strictly proper and polite tone, as she bent forward that Mark could better hear her words.

"Jennie's first-rate. Superfine, I might say. She decided not to come to the station, as Father was somewhat excited at the prospects of company. He is always pleased to meet new friends, to whom he may repeat his sea yarns. We have heard them so many times, we get very sleepy."

Mark smiled. "It's a long time we have tried to get you to visit us."

"Yes," answered Abner, "well nigh onto ten years. I can't afford to be away much of the time since I have taken up the gasoline business which keeps me so all-fired busy."

Maria wriggled slightly in her seat. Her hands moved nervously in her brown cotton gloves. She was doing her best to control her speech. Abner's eyes wandered in the street. "Pretty crowded," he ventured to remark. "What's going on today?" "Nothing, it's just our usual everyday crowd," replied Mark.

They soon reached the four-story brick building that was the home of Mark Robb. The ground floor was used for a restaurant, and the rest of the home was their dwelling-place. They mounted a flight of enclosed stairs and were met by Abner's sister, Jennie. She greeted them with an excess of cordiality and threw her arms for the second time around her brother's neck, and explained, "Dear old Abe, I am glad to see you."

"I'm awfully glad to see you, Jen," responded her brother. "You look mighty well a little stouter, but not a day older. I guess it agrees with you up here in Boston." Jennie turned and relieved Maria of her wraps.

Abner eyed the room, which contained a baby-grand piano, a blue velvet davenport with several richly upholstered chairs. "Gosh!" he murmured under his breath,—then to his brother-in-law,—"Guess, by the looks you've made some money."

Mark was short and thin, of the blonde type, and wore glasses. He slightly raised his heels, and complacently folding his hands, he answered, "Well, rather so, perhaps." Then, sanguidly, "I hope in the future to do better."

Maria's eyes were fastened on her sister-in-law's clothes. Mrs. Robb, unlike her brother Abner, was of a plump figure, clear skinned, and had dark blue eyes, enhanced by a profusion of dark hair. He was lank with sallow skin. There seemed to be no resemblance between them.

While taking notice of their surroundings, a slow shuffling step was heard in the next room. Mark's father, Captain Timothy Robb, appeared in the doorway. Once tall, with broad shoulders, now stooping with a shrinkage of ninety years, his face seemed enfurrowed deep into bronze tan

that sun, wind and sea-wave had painted so deeply that time cannot obliterate. His flashless and somewhat glassy blue eyes were deeply set beneath gray shaggy brows. Only a slight fringe of gray hair marked the contour of his head. He was toothless and unshaven. His clothes were neat and fashioned of the sea-faring man.

As the Captain approached, the group hurried to meet him, while Mark ran for his chair, which was ancient and straight-backed. This he preferred to the new fangled kind. "You two sit down by father and he will entertain you, while Mark and I go down to see Peter about luncheon." "By the way, Jennie, we had little or nothing for breakfast, and I don't think a lunch would satisfy us. I always have dinner at 12 o'clock, and it's a long time until supper." His sister laughed heartily as she pressed Abner's hand. "Don't worry brother, I will see that your appetite is satisfied."

Abner turned somewhat apologetically to the old man, who seemed to comprehend the situation. "That's all right, mate," he said, with a considerable strength of voice. "The first time I came to Boston and went to one of these victualling establishments, it seemed to me they only gave a bite of anything. It was all dishes, clamor and noise on deck. Perhaps things have changed.

Mark says they have, especially in fashions. Well, that time I came down, I left Jennie (that's my boat, as likely a craft as ever you've seen), I left it at its moorings, and Jasper, my son-in-law, said he'd watch over it while I was away. I was afeared he would try to run it, but he couldn't do it. I tried to larn him it but twan't no use. When a young person tries to tell you what you already know and what they don't know, they will soon be adrift and land on a rocky bottom. Why, Mate, you see the boat is doomed. You see, down at the port, they don't make much of fashion. If we have a good thing, we stick to it. Well, my business was to take out sailing parties of city folkses down here for the summer. Some of them fashions looked mighty queer, but not as bad as some I saw on my first trip to Boston. You see the first thing I saw was a woman—they said it was a woman—but it looked exactly like one of them sea-sarpents. Her hair was made into a waterfall, her waist was the size of a mooring pile, her dress dragged fathoms on the ground, tacking so'west to east. She never hoisted her sail."

While the old man paused for a breath, Abner took occasion to say, "The dress of a woman is quite different now, Captain." "Yes," the Captain continued, "I see them when I go downstairs

to eat, with the hair cut short, and I am sure the topmast sail of my boat Jennie would make two dresses of to-day. They fit so tight that their sails cannot flap. Now there is no need to hoist or reef the sail."

"You must miss your boat," interposed Maria. Before the Captain could reply, Abner hurriedly asked, "Don't you find the land sharks as peculiar as any that the sea produces?" "They are poor imitations," replied the Captain. "Yes, I do miss my boat. I named it Jennie after your sister, as she was such a likely gal, is Jennie. A good daughter-in-law. There is no better."

The old man leaned back in his chair and paused for a moment. He then resumed, "The sea is my life. I hope when I reach port there will be plenty of water yonder."

Jennie came bouncing into the room with the remark, "Father, you must rest now, while these hungry people eat their dinner." Abner rose to his feet at the call for dinner. "Sister," he said, "would it be convenient for us to take in the movies this afternoon? You see at home, we have 'um every other Saturday. I presume in Boston you have them every Saturday." "Indeed, they do," laughingly said his sister, "not only Saturday but every day of the week, Sundays not excepted." "I should draw the line there,"

said Abner, "you know we weren't brought up to trespass on the holy Sabbath Day." "True, the present view is to wipe out the old teaching and invent something pleasanter and easier." "It should not be," remonstrated Abner, "and besides it will take a great deal of rubbing in to change my views."

The fifth day of their stay in Boston, Abner showed signs of restlessness. There had been continuous sightseeing and daily attendance at the moving pictures. The Captain's oft-repeated stories were getting somewhat stale, and he longed for the coarse everyday jokes of the blacksmith shop.

Maria had seen the best stores, but with a scanty supply of spending money, even the bargain counters were beyond her means. Mark politely urged them to stay over the week-end, but inwardly he was conscious of something akin to weariness of mind and body, which comes to one turned aside from their daily routine. His father apparently bore the stress better than he did. Jennie, too, showed signs of irritability after the prelude of vanishing pleasures.

Abner and his wife held a conference in their bedroom the night before, in which they both held the same opinion.

"Thanks, Mark," Abner replied promptly with a suggestion of eagerness in his words. "We've had a fine visit. It couldn't have been better. But, you see, it won't do to leave the place and animals too long."

"Yes, I know, that's so," acquiesced Mark, "but two days more, and one of these is Sunday, would not make much difference."

"Well, you see, I remember what Grandfather Jones used to say. Never ride a free horse to death. And my mother told us that short visits make long friends."

"Yes, yes," assented Mark. "I, too, was taught in like manner, but in the case of near relatives such talk ought not to have any weight."

Abner looked thoughtful,—as if some hidden memories were at work. "It will involve quite an argument to satisfy me on that subject. Let's change it. I want to say again that I have had a ripping good time, and as for Maria Jane, she had a good time too. Pleasant every day, never out-of-sorts once, ain't that a sign that a woman is happy."

Mark weighed his next words rather carefully. "An overworked man or woman cannot appear at the best advantage." "You're right again, Mark. I tell Maria Jane when she wants me to chop wood, or weed the garden, after a busy day

in the shop, that too much sweating at the brow ain't good for nobody."

"Well, when will you come again?" asked Mark. "Probably not for some time. I must have seen pretty much all of Boston by this time." Mark grew humorous. "I could interest you in many new things. You remind me of a man that went abroad and was there only a week. He was asked why he did not stay longer. Well, he said, if the Almighty made the world in six days, he thought he could see it in that length of time."

Maria was packing some little souvenirs in the new suitcase that Jennie had presented her brother. She gave Maria a pair of kid gloves and a string of white carved beads. "They will brighten you up," she explained. "They ain't many to see us at home," she droned gloomily. "Your hat will be very pretty," said Jennie, cheerfully, "be sure that the feather is drooping on the left side as that will give it style."

For the time being Abner and his wife forgot their scruples regarding the ill omens of Friday. Her husband stood motionless, then swinging his arms to and fro, said exaltingly, "By George, Maria, it will seem mighty good to start the fire agoing in the forge, and hear the anvil sing again." "I long to see Tommy," said his wife. Their interest was all centered on their home.

They were witnesses of the truism of life—that it is easier to carry one's own burdens than to seek others that they know not of.

CHAPTER XXIII

ONE morning early in April this announcement appeared in the social and personal column of the Sefton *Daily News:* The Rev. and Mrs. Amos Maysfield of Parkington announce the engagement of their daughter, Mildred, to Mr. James Sterling of Sefton, Massachusetts. Mr. Sterling is a man well known, both in business and political circles of this state. For some years he has been President of the Colonial Bank and Trust Company of Sefton. Miss Maysfield is a graduate of Wellesley College, and has given some time to the study of nursing at the Glenford Hospital.

Miss Gale sent this clipping in a letter to her niece. Miss Martha had never quite got over the fact that Elizabeth and James Sterling had not fallen in love with each other. She could not for the life of her see why they did not with such golden opportunities. Elizabeth Harding sent a congratulatory note to Mr. Sterling, which he in turn passed on to Mildred.

"I hope you will meet Miss Harding," he said. "I am sure you would be the best of friends."

Mildred nodded assent. She read the letter carefully and could detect nothing in it, but a

sincere desire that Mr. Sterling would be very happy as he deserved to be. There was not the slightest tinge of jealousy or disappointment, merely a friendly interest. Since her husband's death, Mrs. Harding had been a partial invalid herself, and Elizabeth remained very close to her mother.

The summer of James Sterling's engagement to Mildred Maysfield, Miss Gale had prevailed upon her sister to dispose of the home in Vermont so that she and Elizabeth could make their home with her at Sefton. James Sterling had called upon them and had been cordially received.

Much of his time was taken in making the daily journey of fifteen miles to Parkington. An early date in October had been arranged for the wedding. The ceremony was performed by Mildred's father in the presence of a few relatives and intimate friends. After the wedding breakfast, the happy couple left on their wedding trip, which included Lake Mohonk and the Catskill mountains.

Ernest Maysfield rejoiced at his sister's happiness. He had finished his theological studies at the Seminary and was ready to accept a call for a settled pastorate. As had been his custom for many years, he spent his vacation at Uncle John's and ofttimes thought of the girl whom he had seen but twice, and he wondered what had caused

the report that she was engaged to James Sterling. He made a second trip to Sefton and called upon the old gardener. Mr. Jenkins said that Miss Elizabeth had had an invalid father, and she had had to take care of him and her mother. That was the reason, in his opinion, that she did not come to Sefton as was her custom. Now her father was dead. She had to take care of her mother. "A mighty fine girl is Miss Elizabeth. Will make someone a good wife." As to her being engaged to Mr. Sterling, "A mighty fine man is Mr. Sterling," interjected Jenkins. "I didn't believe they were engaged. Mr. Sterling has just married the nurse that took care of him when he was sick with influenza last winter. Some folks wondered at it, but they do say that she is a likely girl and that she is very happy. I reckon most folks have to choose for themselves else they're not very happy. They used to say that matches were made in heaven."

Mr. Jenkins paused, and removing his hat scratched his head leisurely, and with a cast of irony in his tone said, "I swan if some matches these days are made in heaven, they better give up the job as a poor experience. He stopped, and looking Ernest carefully over, asked, "Are you tied up yet?"

"No," laughingly replied Ernest, "not yet."

Late in October the Sterlings came back, and were soon happily established in their attractive home. Miss Gale, her sister, and Elizabeth soon presented themselves to call on the new bride. Mildred at once recognized the older ladies as graduates of the old school, and the gentle, unassuming manner of Elizabeth quite won her heart. That night she said to her husband, "Jim, let's invite them to dinner very soon. It is nice to be on friendly terms with one's neighbors, and nothing will bring people together more happily than a chat at dinner."

"Yes, Mildred, I wish them to come, as they will surely fall in love with my pretty wife. Why not Saturday?" he suggested.

Mildred readily consented to the plan, adding, "I will telephone Erny to come over for the week-end." Then with a conscious pride she said, "Jim, I am very proud of my big brother."

On Saturday evening the visitors arrived promptly at a quarter of seven. They were discussing the happenings of the summer that was gone when the maid came in as if to announce dinner. Mr. Sterling motioned her to wait.

"I wonder why Erny does not come," Mildred said. "You don't suppose that he has taken to walking over, do you?"

"Perhaps," answered Jim. "The men that

were in service would laugh at a fifteen mile tramp."

"Here he comes," exclaimed Mildred as she clapped her hands together. "Excuse me," she said as she hastened to the door to let him in. After a sisterly greeting she took his arm and guided him to the living room.

"This is my brother," she said, "the Rev. Ernest Maysfield. Allow me to present him to Miss Gale, Mrs. Harding and Miss Harding."

Ernest mechanically shook the hands of the elder ladies, but his eyes were fastened upon the handsome girl that sat beside a table, her face partly hidden by a large silken lamp shade. She had been idly turning the leaves of a book, and did not look up until Ernest stood before her. She rose to her feet and extended her hand, and as their eyes met the color flushed her cheeks. The thought instantly flashed into her mind, "This is my knight," and Ernest standing before her in a petrified silence, inwardly exclaimed, "This is the girl of my dreams."

Dinner was announced and this realistic pantomime was unnoticed by others. Mildred turned to her husband and said, "Jim, will you take out Miss Gale? I will escort Mrs. Harding, and Ernest you please take Miss Harding out to dinner."

Ernest Maysfield seemed for a few seconds to have lost his head. Elizabeth was the first to regain her composure and, as she took his proffered arm said, "Did you walk over?"

"Yes, or rather no," he said absently. "I walked only a part of the way, as a farmer picked me up."

"How rich!" she said. "I think a conversation with these worthy people gives us food for reflection."

At the dinner table Miss Gale sat at the right of her host, while her sister occupied a place at the left. Elizabeth and Ernest were on each side of the hostess. Mildred and Elizabeth did most of the talking, while Ernest sat in silence unless a remark was addressed to him. He related long afterwards to Elizabeth that he was stupefied with joy.

His sister, observing his unusual manner, alluded playfully to it, "Erny, why so quiet? I hope you are not composing your sermon now," and turning to Elizabeth she explained that her brother was to preach to-morrow at Dewbury, only six miles from there."

"Perhaps," suggested Elizabeth, "dinner table gossip is not very conducive to compositions of that character."

After dinner, Mr. Sterling occupied himself

with the radio for the entertainment of Miss Gale and her sister, while the younger members gathered around the piano. Elizabeth was an accomplished pianist, while Mildred excelled in vocal music.

The acquaintance of Ernest and Elizabeth progressed rapidly. A little later, with some slight excuse for going, Mildred left them alone. Her husband beckoned her to his side to enjoy a faraway concert.

Ernest speaking more with his eyes than his lips said, "You are fond of nature and of walking. May I have the privilege of a tramp with you if the day is fine on Monday?"

"Thank you, Mr. Maysfield," replied Elizabeth, "I shall be happy to go."

Miss Gale announced that Jenkins was to come for them at exactly nine-thirty and that they must be in readiness.

Good-nights were said and pleasant remarks on the evening just spent were made. Ernest gave Elizabeth's hand a firm pressure as his gray eyes met hers, and in that look was mirrored her future happiness. It was well that Ernest Maysfield had prepared the sermon that he was to deliver to the good people of Dewbury; for the sudden joy that had dawned upon him excluded the usual trend of thought and study. His dis-

course dwelt largely upon the certainties of joy that come after morning and the fact that the fruits of plentiful service are joy and gladness. "Be sure," he reiterated, "that the clouds that darken and almost obscure our pathway will scatter, opening upon the sunshine of hope and joyous expectation." The discourse was uplifting, and his hearers expressed the belief that he had the promise of becoming one of the foremost preachers of the day.

Elizabeth retired early after the meeting with Ernest Maysfield. She lay very quietly on her bed, fearing almost to move for fear the great happiness in her soul be disturbed or broken. It all seemed so unusual after the long dreary waiting. She longed for the morning to come that once more she might look into his speaking gray eyes. She tried in vain to calm her excited nerves and sleep, but it was useless and, throwing a cape over her shoulders, she raised the window. The night was clear and beautiful as she gazed on its silent mysteries. It seemed to her that in it all she could trace the imagery of her newly found happiness. Was this great love to be the reward of the long waiting which had been filled with loving service to an invalid father? The stars seemed to wink and blink in approval as if they were saying, "Yes, your long expected joy

has come and you have lost nothing by patient waiting."

At the same time, Ernest Maysfield stood before his window. The voices of the night seemed to arise from their slumber and whisper to him that the girl of his dreams had come at last, a living presence. Was this joy that was before him to be a taste of the reward that was his merit when he renounced his worldly ambitions for a more sacred calling? He was more than conscious that joy and gladness would supersede his troubles. He stood long at his window in profound meditation, "How can I wait until Monday to see her again?" was the question of his heart.

The longest day and night have their endings, and as the sun shone brightly in the cloudless sky, he presented himself at Miss Gale's front door. Elizabeth had been waiting a full hour idly turning the leaves of the *Boston Herald.* In answer to the ring of the doorbell she sent Esmeralda back and opened the door herself.

"You are ready to go?" asked Ernest.

"Yes," she said. "Shall we start now?"

"If it is your pleasure," he said, and they walked down the garden path into the broad highway. For some time Ernest contemplated the rare vision of beauty at his side. Elizabeth, too, was self-conscious and the conversation was

somewhat stilted until they left the highway for the fields and wooded slopes. Then, it seemed that the world was theirs and they chatted easily together.

"It seems to me," he said, "that I know every inch of these woods, the hoot owls and the surprising views. Do you remember that I met you in these woods not far from here?" he asked.

"Yes, I do remember," she said, and the radiant look she gave him of itself answered his question.

"Suppose we find the old chestnut tree and I will crack the burrs for you as I did then."

"I was a little afraid of you that day as you came so suddenly upon me with that big rifle," said Elizabeth. "You looked so soldierly in that khaki suit you were wearing. I am so glad that you have it on to-day," she said.

"Yes," he answered, "I never feel quite right when taking these hikes without it."

Soon the venerable chestnut tree loomed up in the distance.

"I like to walk," and she turned her happy face to him. She wore the daintiest little crushed gray hat, while underneath escaped tiny curls of richest gold. A soft gray sweater and short skirt of the same color with gray sport shoes finished her costume. Upon reaching the tree and

commenting on the lack of chestnut burrs, Ernest suggested that they rest awhile, and finding a large smooth stone he spread his sweater over it. He asked her to share his seat, and they sat down together. Ernest Maysfield did not intend that any more time than was absolutely necessary should delay the great question pulling at his heart strings. They sat in silence for a while. He looked down at the dry leaves that he was scattering about his feet with the stick he held in his hand.

"I want to say something to you, Miss Harding. Can you bear with me to hear my story?" he eagerly asked. He went on, not waiting for her reply.

"Do you remember the first time we met? I was dozing after a very busy day in the hayfield at my Uncle John's, and lay half asleep when I was startled by the honking of a car. You were evidently in trouble. I hastened to your assistance. You asked me so frankly who I was that I jokingly posed as a hired man. Well, you gave me this piece of silver. It has been my mascot ever since. After that you hurried on. You must have thrown some fairy enchantment over me because I forgot to read the number or make of your car. For days I searched to get some clue, and finally discovered that the owner of your car

was a Miss Gale of Sefton. Soon after this discovery, I went over to Sefton and held a conference with the old gardener. He told me that you had just gone abroad with your aunt, Miss Gale. He also gave me the startling information that you were supposed to be engaged to Mr. James Sterling. My heart sank within me, for now I knew that I must desist from filling my mind with sweet thoughts of you by day, and with peaceful dreams at night. After that, the way seemed long and dreary, but many times the bitterness in disappointment helps us in taking the first steps in a most important decision. Soon after I fulfilled the desire of my parents as well as my own inclination to choose the profession of the ministry for my life work." After a slight pause, Ernest continued, "The second time that I looked upon your beautiful face was under this very tree. I was so thrilled that I could hardly speak, but catching a glimpse of Mr. Sterling, your supposed fiancee, gave me the required strength to steady my nerves to leave you at once and go my way. I summoned to my aid the supreme test of man's honor. I tried to forget by taking up old friendships, but my friends were wholly changed, in most cases given over to the new fad called Modernism. They were like a structure that was started with a good foundation, but proper mate-

rials for building were not used, and under some extreme pressure it toppled and fell. Their ways were so distasteful to me that I never could follow them while wandering in my garden of Gethsemane. I was overjoyed to hear of my sister's engagement to Mr. Sterling. My courage and hope revived, for I knew that it would be only a question of time when we should meet. You could see what a joyous surprise came to me on Saturday night when I looked into your face again. It has been a long time to wait to tell you of my love for you."

He turned and looked earnestly at Elizabeth, who sat with her eyes cast down, listening intently to the man at her side. "Am I presumptuous?" he asked, "after so short and formal an acquaintance to speak of my love for you? If so, place me on probation and I will wait forever if necessary to win your love. But," he plaintively added, "I have really known you for such a long time as the girl of my dreams." Elizabeth neither moved or spoke.

Ernest changed his position slightly to gain courage for his next remark. "There is one thing that troubles me," he said hesitatingly. "I have a haunting fear that a girl that could refuse a man like James Sterling must already have given her heart into another's keeping."

As he finished speaking, he grasped the stick that lay at his feet and held it in both of his hands as a balancing pole.

Elizabeth partly raised her eyes as she said in a calm, clear, sweet voice, "You are right. My heart is in another man's keeping. He is known to me as my knight, my true knight. We met before I ever knew James Sterling." She looked up as if expecting some playful rejoinder, but the snapping of the stick in Ernest Maysfield's hand was the only sound. She looked at him for a moment and was struck by the whiteness in his bronze face. Elizabeth was too honest to prevaricate and too conscientious to tease. She reached forth her hand, and placing it in his trembling one, said sweetly, "Ernest, I, too, have been waiting a long time for the coming of my dear knight."

Like magic the rich color crept underneath the heavy coat of tan on Ernest's face, and taking both of Elizabeth's hands in his, he sought her glowing eyes as if for a reassurance, then folding her in his strong arms, he said, "My darling."

CHAPTER XXIV

MISS GALE willingly consented to the union of her niece with Ernest Maysfield. She had pondered the subject carefully. She liked his sister, and she knew from reputation that his family compared favorably with her own in the Blue Book. She had heard the Rev. Amos Maysfield preach, and she was pleased to know that Ernest was to follow in his father's footsteps. She knew, also, that Elizabeth would adapt herself to the situation and assist her husband in his pastoral work. The following June was the time fixed for the wedding, and Miss Gale assiduously began to work out a very complete program. "He is really a second James Sterling," she vouched in confidence to her sister. "How fortunate we are to have in prospect such a fine nephew and son-in-law."

Elizabeth beamed with happiness, while Ernest's demeanor was the symbol of perfect satisfaction. During the winter, he received calls to a number of parishes, of which the most attractive was the church at Dewbury. It was a small but a select parish, and for that reason there was more work to do. The family friends favored his accepting it, but he felt he could not

afford to do so until the summer was gone. As he passed most of his time at Sefton he said, "When summer goes, with Elizabeth's consent, I will take up my work at Dewbury."

On the sixth of June the wedding bells rang out in happy chimes. The Rev. Amos Maysfield assisted the Sefton minister in performing the ceremony. Mildred was matron of honor and the bride's only attendant. She wore a gown of orchid satin profusely embroidered with pearls. She was pale with only a touch of orchid coloring in her cheeks. She looked so fair that she seemed to rival the bouquet of orchids that she carried; at least so thought James Sterling as he turned his gaze from the beautiful bride to the slight girlish figure of his young wife. "I am perfectly satisfied," was the thought that echoed and re-echoed from his grateful heart.

The bridal party stood beneath a canopy of roses in the spacious parlor of the old Gale mansion. When the solemn service came to an end, Ernest Maysfield felt as though the gates of everlasting peace had opened to him. Outside the grounds, among the beautiful flowers, were tables set for refreshments. Miss Martha, in a shimmering gown of a silver gray, was a picture of serenity as she moved among her guests with the grace and dignity of the old-time gentlewoman.

Mrs. Harding, too, with motherly pride carried out the traditions of the family. Jenkins, the important factotum of the place, stood at the entrance, opening and closing the doors of the stylish conveyances as they came into line. Altogether the occasion was a most brilliant affair, attracting newspaper comment far and near. Mid showers of confetti, the happy couple left in the Dodge for Canada and the middle west. After an ideal honeymoon, they returned in time to accept Uncle John's invitation to spend the last week of August at Maple Tree Farm.

Late one afternoon, Ernest and Elizabeth were sitting at the foot of the old tree. Elizabeth was reading aloud, while her husband, in a half sitting posture, was resting his cheek on his hand, gazing fondly at his wife.

Uncle John peering through the window beckoned Aunt Leddy to his side. "It's the same old story repeated over and over again," he said. "How splendid it is to see them so happy. I told you it would come out all right, didn't I, ma?" and he patted his wife on her cheek. "These children have been a great comfort to us, and I hope there will be children's children for us to bring up. God didn't see fit to give us any of our own, but we've been mighty happy after all."

As he finished Uncle John turned and kissed his

wife, and as he glanced at the clock said briskly, "it's time I went out to see about the chores."

"And I to see about supper," rejoined Aunt Leddy, and she followed him to the kitchen. He took his old straw hat from the peg by the side of the kitchen mirror and holding it in both hands, spent several minutes peering into its crown. He suddenly broke from his musing with the ejaculation, "Gee, ma, how we shall miss them when summer goes."

There was no distrust in the heart of either Ernest Maysfield or his wife for their future happiness, because they understood that the true meaning of life is to bear and suffer if necessary for each other. The world is busy with its lovers, and ever ready to resign its interest after the final vows are said. It turns with Cupid in search of new lovers, and so we must leave this happy couple that we have followed so closely. They, too, must fight the battle of life unaided by the world that loves a lover. They also must be left in blissful ignorance of the relentless hand of time. And in justice to the reader of this narrative, we must part with others that have been with us as we followed our lovers.

At Christmas time, James Sterling was made very happy by the gift of a baby girl, a second Mildred he agreed at once, in spite of the fact

that nearly everyone that looked upon the wriggling bunch of pink flesh declared she bore the features of her father.

Mrs. Pipper, who never had been quite contented since a new mistress had come to preside over the domestic affairs, was not filled with happiness at the arrival of the baby. She said in confidence to Harriet Dearborn that it would bring no end of trouble with nurses and all kinds of objectionable doings. "I shall leave," she whispered to Harriet. "I like Mrs. Sterling, and I have no fault to find with her, but," she added complacently, "there can be but one mistress in any home."

When James Sterling was informed of his housekeeper's decision, he was not surprised, for her daily attitude had shown dissatisfaction. He spoke most kindly to her, referring to her many years of faithful service in his employ. "I will gladly pension you during your lifetime. You are getting so much older that a little rest would seem advisable," he said.

Mrs. Pipper looked irritated, either because of the insinuation in respect to her age conveyed by his words, or because he did not evince a keener interest in the loss he would sustain by her departure.

She immediately straightened her shoulders,

and proudly throwing back her head, said with unwonted asperity, "I am not a beggar, sir, nor am I past usefulness. Thank you, but I have already secured the position of matron at the Parker Sanitarium at Greenville."

James Sterling knew it would do no good to try and force upon her in her present frame of mind any compensation in the way of money. Nevertheless he prepared a certificate of stock which he sent her as a Christmas gift. She evidently relented, and sent him a note expressing sincere gratitude. She in return sent the little Mildred a one-piece knitted suit, the patient work of her own hands.

Abner Jones pursued his mechanical course with little change, during many uneventful years. Maria Jane finally gave up her early efforts to reform his habits, reaching the conclusion at last that he by nature was shiftless, and no power on earth could change him. If she could have reached this conclusion earlier she would have been a happier woman.

Deacon Stebbins passed away after reaching his seventy-ninth birthday. He enjoyed reading the *Saturday Evening Post* to the very last, and even went to the movies, although the secret of his doing so was known only to his grandchildren.

One day in September, Mildred Sterling re-

ceived a letter with unfamiliar handwriting. She opened it, and it read as follows:

My dear Mildred:

You will be surprised to receive a letter from me. I have read of your marriage to a very fine man and am sure that you are very happy. You probably have not heard much about me, as I am known by another name. You have noticed newspaper articles referring to Pundita, the famous oriental dancing girl. That girl was I. I studied for the drama, but dancing was my fort, and for some time I figured conspicuously in vaudeville. I did not care to keep it up, but my manager insisted, and for three years I lived at a rapid pace.

The last year told upon my health, which I tried in vain to build up with stimulants. I smoked cigarettes incessantly, drank wine and champagne at late suppers. I tried hard to be temperate, but found that when once addicted to these false remedies I was like a slave in chains. I had no personal liberty. To make a long story short, I am now reaping the results of my mistaken life. I am in a sanitarium with that incurable disease, quick consumption. Perhaps, you remember the last time we met that you told me that you were studying to be a nurse. I laughed, and mockingly asked you if I was ever ill if you would come and nurse me. But I am beyond any

such friendly help. Mildred dear, may I call you that just for the sake of old times now, for I know my earthly days are few? Your brother Ernest tried to save me from myself. I resented his interference, but forgave him speedily. Please tell him that Tom Evans was very wild and reckless for some time, and that it was at an evening service at the old South Church in Glenford that words spoken by Erny helped him to change his course in life. Tom was well meaning, but I could not marry him. I never cared for any man sufficiently to give up my independent career. Tom has reformed, and is engaged to a quiet country girl. She is full of good sense and will help him in quite a different way than I could. He has been to see me since I have been in this hospital and I could see that he was quite another man. How fortunate are they that incline to the better way without the help of the hardest of taskmasters—experience.

My friend, Eva Lockwood, was Tom's cousin. She was married into a prominent family, but was soon divorced. She wrote me some time ago that her first marriage was a failure, but she intended to try it again as soon as the man could get a divorce from his wife.

Life seems to be one grand tragedy after another, and I often wonder if there is any per-

fect happiness in this world. I have heard a good deal about the better way from a clergyman who talks to us every week. I can see even now with my perverted taste that your way was best. O that I could have seen it earlier that I might have had strength to resist the temptation to seek the things that perish with the taking. I wish my mother had been more like your Aunt Polly. She was so eager to trot in the society of the rich and magnificent that she overlooked all else. She readily consented to my studying for the stage when she knew that the daughters of prominent families and ministers were following the same course. My father and mother were traveling in California and they met with a motor accident which caused their death. I was not aware that my father had accumulated the large amount of property that he left. He left no will and I am the only heir. I have placed my affairs in the hands of a trusty lawyer, and have willed the property for the building of a home for friendless girls, and also those of an adventurous spirit to whom the restrictions of home life become irksome and repellent. There will be ample provision for lectures and profitable entertainments, religious services and the reading of the Bible every day. There will be moving pictures and a

well ordered dance hall. I see no reason why religion and pleasure should not walk hand in hand. I tried only pleasure and it failed me. I would give others a chance to lay hold on something that will not fail them.

It is my wish that this memorial I am leaving may appeal to my early friends who knew me at my best, in happy childhood. Perhaps Ernest will go sometimes and talk to the girls. I am sure his inimitable goodness will impress them no matter how willful and stubborn they may be. I sometimes ask myself if I had been where I could have seasoned my pleasures with something besides one excitement after another, if I would have listened.

I am sorry to trouble you with a letter so full of regretful allusions. It would greatly comfort me to know that you and your brother would sometimes remember your old playmate in your prayers, for when summer goes, I shall forever be at rest. Good-bye, Mildred. Please say good-bye to Erny for me. May we all meet in the great hereafter.

Although I have done the things that I ought not to have done, I would impress upon your mind that although I have been ignorantly defiant of the good way, still I have never been wickedly

bad, and I beg you, if possible, to forget the interval between our school days and the present.

Sincerely yours,

EVELYN DURAND.

This letter stirred Mildred at once to interest herself in this girl that she had known and loved in other days. In the few weeks that remained she lavished every comfort and kind attention on the wasting sick girl. Ernest, too, often went, accompanied by his wife, to talk and pray with her. One would never think that the pale sunken features bore any resemblance to the Evelyn Durand they had known. Ernest Maysfield officiated at the last sad rites. Her grave was covered with beautiful flowers, and later by a tall shaft surmounted with a white angel pointing heavenward. Engraven on the tablet was the name Evelyn Durand, aged twenty-nine. And beneath her name was an inscription of her own selection, "When summer goes, I shall be satisfied."

One day in August, James Sterling and his wife stood on the sleep-porch of their lovely home. They were watching the little Mildred as she lay sleeping. After a few moments of rapt silence he turned, and placing his arm around his wife said earnestly, "Mildred, when summer goes there will be no winter of discontent in our hearts."

As we say farewell to the many characters that have peopled this narrative, we may explain that all are carried along by the resistless current called Life. It leaves us all adrift. Some strike out boldly and swim, never losing sight of the opposite shore. Others choose a pleasure barque and glide contentedly for a time on peaceful waters. The human derelicts pass, they carry no deeper meaning than untoward accidents that are soon forgotten. Occasionally, they sight the swimmer following in the wake of others that have reached the shore. They note with scorn the dullness of his course. Finally when time grows less, and heavy tides claim chart and compass, unless a friendly mariner comes to the rescue, they never reach the shore.

Therefore, it is wise to prepare for winter before the summer goes.

THE END.

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